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The Almohad: the Rise and Fall of the Strangers

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by

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Abstract

The Almohad (1120-1269) displaced the Almoravid dynasty (1040-1147) as the rulers of the Maghreb and Andalusia in 1147 and created the largest Berber kingdom in history. They conquered the first indigenous rulers of the Maghreb by aggregating the Masmuda tribes from the High Atlas Mountains and enlisting the Zenata and Arab tribes from the Northern Maghreb. The Almohad rule built upon the existing Almoravid infrastructure; however, their cultural, administrative, and military approach entailed a more integrated tribal organization, centralized authority, and an original Islamic ideology. In creating this empire they envisioned the Maghreb as a consolidated political center and not a periphery adjunct to the Abbasid caliphate. They would consolidate the Maghreb, the Balearic Islands, and Ifriqiya and eventually proclaim their own caliphate. They returned al-Andalus to its former glory of the Umayyads and stemmed the southern advance of the Christian kingdoms of Iberia for one hundred years. Then in 1212, at the height of their power, they lost the decisive battle of Las Navas de Tolosa and within twenty years were all but removed from al-Andalus. This sudden decline has been attributed to lack of support of the Maliki ulema, whom they challenged with their newly envisioned religious theology, and internecine tribal conflicts. These elements assuredly attributed to the Almohad disappearance from al-Andalus and their eventual defeat in the Maghreb by the Marinids; however, a primary contributor to their demise, that is often overlooked or underestimated, was the dissipation and loss of control of their economy.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Thesis

There has been an outpouring of scholarship regarding the Almohad in the last twenty years and a reexamination of their ideological and cultural impact on the Maghreb and al-Andalus. This paper will fill an existing void in the scholarship and emphasize the role the economy played in the ability of the Almohad to build an empire and why they, at the height of their power, all but disappeared from al-Andalus less than twenty years after the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212. Scholars such as Huici Miranda, Abun Nasr, and most recently Bennison have examined the Almohad decline and focused on the cultural, religious, and idealistic reasons for their collapse. Huici Miranda, who completed one of the most extensive works on the Almohad, attributed their failure to the loss of control of the Arabs tribes in the Maghreb and the Almohad "tyrannical" rule in al-Andalus that encouraged resistance of their co-religionists in the peninsula.[1] Abun Nasr characterized this Berber empire as unable to sustain a religio-political ideal that was contrary to the Maliki standard, which eventually led to their replacement by the less ideologically-driven Marinids.[2] Bennison, in her extensively researched monograph, *The Almoravid and Almohad Dynasties*, attributed the dissolution of the Almohad to tribal rivalries, the challenges of managing an empire of its size, and finally, to the "eccentricity of their caliphate" which limited the amount of religious support they could expect from

[1] Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade* (Tetuán: Imprenta Morocco, 1957), 578.

[2] Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 102. The Marinids would return to the Maliki school of Islam versus the distinctive Almohad doctrine.

Maliki ulema.[3] Whereas each of these elements mentioned above contributed to the eventual disintegration of the Almohad caliphate, this thesis will view the undoing of their empire holistically, weighing the economic factors from the Maghreb, al-Andalus, and the Christian kingdoms of Iberia. It will argue that the Almohad suffered from a weakened economic position in al-Andalus and the Maghreb, and that this was the critical factor that led to their demise. This thesis will shift the emphasis of the arguments made in the current historiography away from the religious-idealistic to the economic-materialist. This paper will thus demonstrate that the economic disruption experienced by the Almohad exacerbated the fault lines of inter-tribal cohesion in the Maghreb and weakened their ability to compete with the northern Christian kingdoms for territorial control.

1.2 Background

At the height of Almoravid power, during the reign of their third sultan, Ali Ibn Yusuf (r. 1084-1143), an unknown cleric emerged from a ten-year sojourn to Damascus and Cairo, where he had studied with the most prominent philosophers of his time and sharpened his vision of what Islam should be and how it should be practiced. This unknown cleric, Ibn Tumart (r. 1120-1130), became the founder of the Almohad dynasty that challenged, and eventually toppled, the Almoravid, the first indigenous empire of the Maghreb. After his return to his homeland in 1120, Tumart had gathered an insignificant following, but this did not deter him from challenging the Almoravid, the highest authorities of the Maghreb, as to what he perceived to be their malpractice of Islam.

[3] Amira K. Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 333.

How did the Almohad achieve this transition with less men, fewer resources, and no infrastructure against the strongest, most entrenched rule the Maghreb had ever known? At the time of Ibn Tumart's return, the Almoravid kingdom stretched from the Southern Sahara to Zaragoza in Iberia, from the Atlantic to Argel, in present day Algiers, and controlled more gold than any previous kingdom in the Maghreb or al-Andalus. The Almoravid had defeated León-Castile, the strongest Christian kingdom in Iberia, at the Battle of Sagrajas in 1086, and this victory still resounded in the hearts and minds of their followers on both sides of the Pillars of Hercules. Did the Almohad accelerate a corrosion that was already in motion? What were the fundamental building blocks of the Almohad empire that allowed them to replace the Almoravid?

In attempting to understand the Almoravid decline and the Almohad foundation it is instructive to look to the preeminent historian of his time, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). Khaldun, in *The Muqaddimah,*[4] is thought to have modeled the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties as exemplary of the rise and fall of states. Khaldun describes the ascension and descent of the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties as embodying a process whereby "prestige lasts at best four generations in one lineage."[5] This deterioration, according to Khaldun, was a natural, four-step transition in which a dynasty's initial desert toughness transitioned to the comforts of sedentary culture; then proceeded to a generation with no memory of the founding values; and passed finally to an unstable fourth generation, which was ripe for collapse. In his analysis, Khaldun described an evolution whereby

[4] Ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami, Abu Zayd 'Abd al-Rahman, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, ed. N. J. Dawood (New York: Princeton University Press, 1967).
[5] Ibid., 105-106.

over the course of time, the *asibiya*, the group cohesion, which served as the emotional and spiritual emulsifier that held dynasties together, slowly atrophied and finally disappeared. The Almoravid and Almohad's experience supported Khaldun's theory, as did the historical trajectory of the Marinids (1244-1465). The Hafsids 1229-1574, direct descendants of the Almohad, would outlast them all, although theirs was a much smaller state. In fact, modern studies support Khaldun's assertion; these Maghreb dynasties were not unique and fit into the worldwide pattern of the rise and fall of empires. Samuel Arbesman, in his study of 41 large empires spanning 3000 BCE to 600 CE, determined that the mean lifespan of kingdoms was 220 years,[6] and the Almohad and the Almoravid fit this model.

There are exceptions in the same geographic area and period that merit mentioning. The Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) arguably existing in the same geographical region and sharing some of the tools the Almohad used to build their state, lasted 600 years. In Iberia, Castile's kingdom lasted from 1065 to 1516, when they transitioned to a consolidated Spain under Charles I (r. 1516-1556) after the death of Ferdinand II (1516). These two aforementioned kingdoms are cited to illustrate that a 200-year lifespan of a state was not a foregone conclusion as argued by Khaldun and the more recent analytical scholarship. Moreover the he Almohad experienced specific events that led to their demise and should be understood outside of a statistical epistemology.

[6] Samuel Arbesman, "The Life-Span of Empires," *Historical Methods* 44, no. 3 (2011): 128. See also: Rein Taagepera, "Expansion and Contraction Patterns of Large Polities: Context for Russia," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1997): 465-504.

This paper will demonstrate that the Almohad built a more durable polity than the Almoravid, and in spite of this, at the pinnacle of their reign, when their empire stretched from Tripoli to the Balearics and from the Maghreb to al-Andalus, after they had eliminated their most resolute internal enemies, their rule disintegrated.[7] Their empire held for over 100 years and four caliphal transitions, but they lost one battle and in less than twenty years their rule in al-Andalus collapsed. The Almohad provide an example that fits Khaldun's formula; however, the loss of *asibiya* alone is not a satisfactory explanation for their decline. They had built a more complex infrastructure than their predecessors; they had a philosophy that was uniquely theirs. They, too, had met the Christians on the battlefield and won,[8] and their governing functions were structurally stronger than the Almoravid.

The abrupt Almohad decline was therefore not inevitable. Most historians point to the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) as the turning point in the Almohad rule of al-Andalus. This battle represented the crossroads at which the fate of the Almohad within the peninsula reversed itself, but this conflict proved not to be the reason for their decline. There are specific explanations for the loss of this battle—logistics, amongst others—that will be discussed in chapter 5. These issues were emblematic of larger fault lines within the Almohad state; the seeds of their demise had already been sown. The Almohad, like other kingdoms of the period, did not employ a standing army; men participated in battle if they believed in the leaders *and* were paid. Troops calculated the probability of victory

[7] Ibn Mardanis died in 1172 and Murcia had passed to the Almohad. The Balearic Islands had fallen to the Almohad in 1203 when they eliminated the Ibn Ghaniya, the last Almoravid holdouts against their empire.
[8] Alarcos (1195) was a resounding victory for the Almohad and will be discussed in more detail further on in this paper.

and remuneration when determining their assistance to the call to arms. While there were improvements to warfare and munitions at the time, by far the most influential variable in the equation of war in the twelfth century was a leader's ability to inspire confidence in his troops and ensure that they received compensation. Many important sieges would occur in this period (Santarém, Toledo, Badajoz, Zaragoza), and siege engines, crossbow technology, and cavalry tactics were important in victory. But the three most critical campaigns of the period, Sagrajas (1086), Los Arcos (1195), and Las Navas de Tolosa (1212), were settled in open field conflicts that determined, in some large part, the direction of who would control al-Andalus.

These battles were not strategic master plans by modern standards;[9] Huici Miranda, who studied these three aforementioned campaigns in great depth, makes this point. Assuredly, this lack of grand strategies favored the bold and the more adept, but undoubtedly, the number of men had an outsized influence on victory. Determining the exact numbers of fighting men in this period is complicated; however, the literature that describes the battles at Sagrajas and Alarcos appears to substantiate that victory favored the largest army.[10] At Las Navas de Tolosa, by contrast, contemporary chroniclers indicate that the Christians were outnumbered but experienced victory in spite of this disadvantage. However, they had assembled a much larger group of fighting men than in their previous losses and history underscores that the dedication and enthusiasm of the

9 Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Las grandes batallas de la reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines)* (Tetuán: Imprenta Cremades, 1956), 12.

10 In both Christian and Muslim sources Alfonso VII was admonished for his impatience and not waiting for reinforcements. At Las Navas de Tolosa it is difficult to determine the exact numbers of troops involved; however, it is known that the Christians had assembled one of the largest contingents in the history of Iberia and even the Muslim sources write "that they had assembled more men than they had in hundreds of years."

Almohad troops was suspect at best. Why the Almohad had lost their enthusiasm and how the Christians' approach to battle preparations evolved in the 110-year period between their loss at Sagrajas and victory at Las Navas is essential to our understanding of the Almohad decline. The conflict between the Almohad and their Christian rivals was as much an economic competition as a military struggle. How the northern Christian kingdoms harnessed more resources at the expense of the Almohad to change the momentum in Iberia will be explained in section 5.1 of this paper.

The other aspect that must be considered when evaluating the Almohad rapid demise was that they had attempted to build a state and an empire at the same time. Much of the foundation of statehood was in place: they established a religious philosophy that promoted cohesion; they developed institutions such as the treasury and the judiciary that survived dynastic transitions; and they integrated leadership from various tribes to conduct cohesive group actions. However, parallel to building their governing apparatus, they were also assembling an empire. There were, at minimum, four geographic regions that required their attention: the Maghreb, Ifriqiya, the Balearic islands, and al-Andalus, the latter of which included five independent Christian principalities they had to confront and a strong Muslim resistance represented by Ibn Madarnis. This required resources and control of the economy that, initially, the Almohad accomplished.

The Almohad developed a more centralized state than the Almoravid, which allowed them to dominate the periphery and extract resources more efficiently;[11] they fit

[11] Pascal Buresi and Hicham El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire: Provincial Administration in the Almohad Caliphate (1224-1269)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). See also Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 214.

Motyl's definition of empire as a "core elite and state [that] dominated peripheral elites… and channeled resource flows from the periphery to the core and back to the periphery."[12] However, as Joseph Tainter emphasizes in his *The Collapse of Complex Societies,* economic factors represent one of the key reasons for the decline of empires, and this would play a more significant role in the Almohad decline than has been discussed by previous scholars.[13]

This paper will document that by the period of Las Navas the Almohad dynasty had lost much of its economic vigor. Due to Christian aggression, the Almohad controlled considerably less population and tax revenue than they had before in al-Andalus. Their gold production in the Maghreb had declined 90 percent from its height under their first caliph, Abd al Mu'min. Their internal economy had weakened because of the focus on trade with the Mediterranean and their supply lines within the Maghreb were being attacked by discontented Marinid (Zenata) tribes. These deficiencies would affect their ability to control the competing clans that they had aggregated at their founding. A certain amount of *force majeure* would factor into the Almohad decline; however, how their mismanagement of controllable events proved more detrimental than natural causes.

[12] Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2001), 4. "Core elites craft foreign and defense policy, control the armed forces, regulate the economy, process information, maintain law and order, extract resources, pass legislation, and oversee borders. In turn, peripheral elites implement core policies," 15. "This entails a shift of the state's economic centre of gravity away from its historic core to a new economic centre located elsewhere in its territory… As a result of this an entirely new centre of population emerges which is likely to have very different social and cultural values from those of the core state," 53.
[13] Joseph A. Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 42. Other reasons for decline emphasized by Tainter were: insufficient response to circumstances; intruders; class conflict; elite mismanagement or misbehavior; chance concatenation of events; depletion or cessation of a vital resource or resources on which the society depends; the establishment of a new resource base; the occurrence of some insurmountable catastrophe; and mystical factors, all of which the Almohad experienced at various levels.

One variable they could not control, that represented a much different landscape than what the Almoravid before them had faced, was a strengthening of the northern Christian kingdoms.

The Christian powers of Iberia while still jockeying amongst themselves for control of the northern territories, had made fundamental political and military improvements to their kingdoms during the transition between the Almoravid and Almohad empires. The marriage of Petronilla (r. 1137-1164) and Ramon Berenguer IV (r. 1131-1162) combined the regions of Aragon and Catalonia, resulting in a stronger polity. The Christian states during the eleventh and twelfth centuries systematically conquered territory and gained its affiliate tax revenue. The taking of Toledo (1085) by Castile, Zaragoza (1118) by Aragon, and Santarém (1147) by Portugal pushed the Christian defensive demarcation 160 miles south, from the Duero to the Tagus river, and by 1200 they controlled 50 percent of the population of Iberia.[14] This was a liminal period where many advances by the Christian kingdoms were most probably imperceptible to the contestants of the confrontation; but when seen in their totality it is understood that each decision enhanced the ability of the northern states to resist the Almohad advance.

Fueros (community land grants), frontier settlement, and papal and local church support were all augmented in this period. As city charters of the frontier, *fueros* encouraged repopulation with men on a constant war-footing. These land grants provided

14 David Cuberes and Rafael González-Val, "The Effect of the Spanish Reconquest on Iberian Cities," *Annals of Regional Science* 58, no. 3 (2017): 378. See Figure 14 in the appendix for the river systems of Spain.

settlers new rights and the possibility of gaining position and something to fight for, creating a second generation of adventurers like Rodrigo de Vivar (Cid el Campeador). In the period leading up to Las Navas, in particular between 1095 to 1212, *fueros* were smaller and more egalitarian than they would come to be after this period, when they would come to be dominated by larger land holders.[15] The implementation of *fueros* to populate newly acquired territory with an economic and military presence, coupled with the increased control of a larger share of the Iberian tax base, made the North a more formidable adversary. Much of the military presence was provided by Christian military orders who were often granted these *fueros*.

The original Christian military orders, namely the Hospitallers and the Templars, were welcomed by the Northern Iberian kingdoms as early as 1120,[16] and the Christian monarchs would add to their number by founding their own. The most prominent examples were the orders of Calatrava (1158) founded in Navarre and later controlled by Castile; Santiago (1170) and Alcántara (1176) founded in León; and Avis (1162) founded in Portugal. These mercenary times, with no standing armies, required both sides of the conflict to call for men that expected to be paid and collect booty for their efforts. In the Christian north, the combination of founding *fueros* and military orders created a more stable defensive military presence than the Almohad's itinerant and provisional troops.

15 Ignacio Álvarez Borge, "Soldadas, situadas y fisco en el reinado de Alfonso VIII de Castilla (1158-1214)," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 7, no. 1 (2015): 64. See also Santos M. Corones González, *Fueros locales del reino de León (910-1230)* (Madrid: Agencia Estatal Boletine del Estado, 2018).

15 Tomas Muñoz y Romero, *Colección de fueros municipales de los pueblos de Castilla, León, Aragón y Navarra* (Madrid: Imprenta de Don José María Alonso, 1847).

16 A. J. Forey, "The Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century," *Traditio* 40 (1984): 198.

Almohad victories, on the other hand, could not have been contemplated if their fellow tribesmen from the Maghreb and the Arabs from Ifriqiya had not agreed to cross the straits to fight in Iberia, which was predicated on the caliphate's ability to fund these efforts.

The Christians did not present a consolidated front against the Almohad. Negotiation between themselves, cajoling and threats from the pope, and support of the local church were all required to unite them to fight their southern foes. The conciliatory efforts of the church did not bring an end to the bickering, raiding, and wars between the northern states of Christendom; that would not occur for another 250 years. But there were moments, Las Navas de Tolosa the most prominent, when the church's intervention coincided with a rare coordination of northern Christian monarchs to aid their eventual victory.

The Christian conquest of Toledo in 1085 and the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 frame the period of the Almoravid and the Almohad presence in Spain. The Almohad entered al-Andalus in 1147 and would not leave the peninsula until 1248.[17] Las Navas de Tolosa unlocked al-Andalus from the Muslim grip and the Christian armies now marched south past the Guadiana and Guadalquivir rivers,[18] which had been under Muslim control for 500 years. In the East, Jaime I of Aragon (r. 1213-1276), son of one of the heroes of Las Navas, Peter II, would sail from Barcelona, conquer the Balearics

[17] One could argue that the *Reconquista* period, a mercurial date to pin down, did not begin until 1212, when the victory for the Christian North led to a cascade of victories leaving only Granada unconquered after 1248. Toledo (1085) and Zaragoza (1118) had fallen into Christian hands before Las Navas de Tolosa (1212); however, in the subsequent thirty-six years the majority of al-Andalus fell into Christian hands: Mallorca (1229); Cordoba (1236); Valencia (1238); Murcia (1243); and Seville (1248), leaving only Granada as an independent Muslim state.
[18] See Figure 14 in appendix for Iberian river systems.

(1229), control the Western Mediterranean, and later advance from the Ebro to the Jucar river to conquer Valencia (1238). It is impossible to separate these northern dynamics from those of the Almohad reign, as al-Andalus was the single wealthiest domain of the Almohad, and the Christian antagonists comprised the most formidable threats to their empire. Much of the Almohad decline can be attributed to their own actions; however, the competition from the Christian kingdoms for the resources of al-Andalus was the strongest it had ever been since Arabs and Berbers had conquered Iberia in 711.

This paper will focus on the period between 1147 and 1212 as it represents the timespan when the Almohad presence in al-Andalus was most prominent (they remained, in limited form, until 1248). In chapter 2 important primary sources and secondary historiography utilized for this study will be examined. Chapter 3 will frame the historical background with a brief overview of Islam's entrance into al-Andalus and the events that led to the Almoravid's invitation to enter Iberia. This chapter will also explore the transition from the Almoravid to the rise of the Almohad empire. Finally, this chapter will describe the changing dynamics of Christian Iberia during the Berber presence in the peninsula. Chapter 4 will describe the foundation of the Almohad religion, culture, and governing mechanisms, and discuss how initial fault lines were woven into the fabric of the Almohad rule as they mixed the Masmuda tribes with Kumiya (Zenata) leadership. Chapter 5 will share insights into what the change in population in Iberia, the growth of military orders, and the founding of *fueros* had on the ability of the Christian kingdoms to resist the Almohad. The events leading up to the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa and how the decisions on both sides of the Tagus river led to the defeat of the Almohad will also

be reviewed. How the Almohad grasp on their economy began to slip and why this led to their expulsion from al-Andalus will also be examined. Chapter 6 will offer final insights and conclusions as to why the Almohad fell and eventually disappeared.

Chapter 2 Historiography

The Almohad have received increased attention in the last two decades and much of this research has been focused on reevaluating the earlier cursory overview that they received as a foil for the *Reconquista* history of al-Andalus. Even in works published during the explosion of Spanish historiography of the 1970s and 1980s, by Collins, Glick, Harvey, and Wasserstein, to name a few, none dedicated a specific monograph to this dynasty. Renewed scrutiny has brought the Almohad dynasty into clearer relief, although many opportunities for study and analysis remain. The primary Muslim and Christian sources available provide ample opportunity to understand the political and military actions of the period, although any specific numerical data available as regards troop sizes and casualties must be viewed with skepticism. Unfortunately, there is scant economic data from which to calculate government expenditures or tax receipts; however, some inferences can shed light on how their economy functioned.

A reevaluation of the primary sources on both sides of the straits is underway,[19] and more study of the Almohad dynastic archives, such as that conducted by Buresi and El Aallaoui, is beginning.[20] More archeological work is also being conducted, such as Ron Messier's project in Aghmat, which is excavating the Almohad's early presence in this area;[21] as well as excavations and surveys being conducted in Spain and Portugal

[19] For an excellent summary of the Almohad primary sources see Sebastián Gaspariño García, "Las fuentes de la historia Almohade," *Revista Al-Mulk* 11 (2013): 25-49.
[20] Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire.*
[21] This work is not complete or published, however, Messier gave the author permission to visit this site that is unearthing an Almohad mosque, hammam, and living quarters.

examining the presence of Christians and Muslims of the period.[22] With this in mind, the historiographical review of the material utilized to research this paper will be divided into the most influential primary and secondary sources. The majority of the secondary sources have been published since 1990, although there are some earlier foundational studies that have been utilized, such as Tomas Muñoz y Romero's *Colección de fueros municipales de los pueblos de Castilla, León, Aragón y Navarra*, published in 1847.

2.1 Primary Sources

The first of the primary sources that presents an eye-witness account of the period, is that of the court scribe, Ibn Sahib al-Sala (d. 1200-1210), a native of Beja in the Algarve, who wrote *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*.[23] Although Ibn Sahib provides an obviously laudatory document of the Almohad regime, he nevertheless offers a first-hand account of the Almohad dynasty under the Caliph Yousuf I (r. 1163-1184), arguably the most successful of all Almohad leaders.[24] While clearly an encomium, it is the only historical narrative that is solely dedicated to Almohad history, and as such provides invaluable details regarding the inner workings of the central Almohad state. Another source, *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista volumen IV, Kitab al-Mu'yuib fi taljis ajbar al-Magrib*,[25] offers an account by a court courtesan, Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahid Al-Marrakusi. Leví-Provençal describes this account as "vulgar," as it did not

[22] Magdalena Valor and Avelino Gutiérrez, *The Archaeology of Medieval Spain 100-1500* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2014). The authors point out that the study of archaeology in medieval Spain has increased dramatically since 1985 and had many more opportunities for discovery.
[23] Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Valencia: Anubar, 1968).
[24] Ibid., 5-6.
[25] Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahid Al-Marrakusi, *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista volumen iv, Kitab al-Mu'yuib fi taljis ajbar al-Magrib*, tran. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Tetuán: Editora Morocco, 1955).

conform to this French historian's scholarly standards. Huici Miranda, however, sees value in this eye-witness telling of events, as Abd al-Wahid served the brother of the fourth Caliph (~1209) and at one point had a private interview with his successor, Yusuf II.[26] The salience of this source is that 'Abd al-Wahid was present at the transition of power between the two teenage kings of the empire as it was collapsing in al-Andalus, and he wrote only twelve years after the pivotal battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212).

A more sober view of the dynasty is provided by the considerable number of state documents and letters that have been uncovered. An important example by Pascal Buresi and Hicham El Aallaoui's is their *Governing the Empire: Provincial Administration in the Almohad Caliphate.*[27] The authors present a detailed analysis of seventy-seven provincial government documents that describe secondary governmental appointments, where non-family members such as Maliki jurists from al-Andalus, received commissions. These documents demonstrate that even as the Almohad were in decline, their centralized administration continued to function, at least for a period.

The third group of available primary sources consists of contemporaneous documents written in Iberia that underscore how the Almohad operated their Andalusian territory. These sources provide insight into how the Almohad were perceived by the co-religionists they conquered and by their Christian rivals. One of the indispensable accounts of these Iberian sources is *Las memorias de 'Abd Allah,* who was the last Zirid king of Granada.[28] This recounts the history of how 'Abd Allah (r. 1073-1090) was

26 Ibid., 246. Yusuf II is mainly referred to in this document as al-Mustansir.
27 Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire.*
28 Ibn Buluggin, 'Abd Allah, *Las memorias de 'Abd Allah, ultimo rey Ziri de Granada, detronado por los Almorávids (1090)*, trans. E. Levi-Provencal and Emilio García Gómez (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1980).

unseated by the Almoravid before the arrival of the Almohad. This memoir provides one of the only first-person narratives of a *taifa*[29] king and how he attempted to balance the Christians' demand for *parias* (tribute) against the newly arrived Berber tribes, meant to rescue him from his Christian adversaries. 'Abd Allah's dilemma, that of an Andalusian Muslim city-state attempting to maximize its own power by leveraging the Berber conquerors against its Christian neighbors, is an oft-repeated dynamic in the twelfth and thirteenth century, and contributes to the understanding of the tension that existed between the newly arrived Berbers and their native Iberian co-religionists. This balancing act was not successfully managed by 'Abd Allah; he lost his kingdom to the Almoravid and was ignobly shipped off to Aghmat, where he would live out his days with a small state stipend and finish his memoirs.

A Christian perspective of the same period was preserved by the first-hand account of *The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile,*[30] written in the first third of the thirteenth century by a clergyman, most likely the bishop of Osma. This account not only provides a Christian perspective of the Almohad during their ascent and decline within al-Andalus, but also describes the internecine arguments, negotiations, and warfare amongst the Christian kingdoms themselves. Not unlike 'Abd Allah of Granada, these Christian kingdoms were not above crossing the religious divide to formalize agreements with the Almohad to better compete with their rival kingdoms. León and Navarre, in particular, opportunistically fought alongside the Almohad to attack their weaker and

[29] After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate (1031) al-Andalus fractured into thirty-eight city states, *taifas*, the Arab word for parties.

[30] *The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile*, ed. and trans. Joseph F. O'Callaghan (Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002).

stronger foes of Portugal and Castile respectively. Additionally, this account shares a clear picture of the jealousies and grudges held by the competing monarchs, that often influenced their political actions. One prominent example is represented by Alfonso IX of León (r. 1188-1230) who would not soon forget the degrading ceremony at Carrion (1188), where he was forced to take a knee to his older cousin, Alfonso VIII of Castile (r. 1158-1214), which in part explains Alfonso IX's absence at Las Navas de Tolosa.[31]

The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile functions well as a sister document to the work of the archbishop of Toledo, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada's *The History of the Affairs of Spain*.[32] Jiménez de Rada's account proves invaluable, as he became the emissary between the papacy and Castile, and was instrumental in rallying support from Rome, Southern France, and Iberia for the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. He was the noble son of a Castilian family through his mother and Navarre through his father, who had served in the court of Alfonso VIII of Castile. This background made Rodrigo de Rada (1170-1247) the ideal candidate to be the ecclesiastic right-hand of Alfonso VIII, and Rodrigo aided him through his travails and victories, including being present at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.[33] Rodrigo de Rada contributes a first-hand account of the preparation for Las Navas and through him one understands how Alfonso avoided many of the military and political missteps made at Alarcos, and gains a further perspective of how the church and the state worked hand in hand during this time frame.

[31] Ibid., 22-23, 28.
[32] Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España*, ed. and trans. Juan Fernández Valverde (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1989).
[33] Ibid., 19.

A second group of primary sources is comprised of the near-contemporary Muslim historians of the period; the two most valuable being Ibn Idhari and Ibn Khaldun. Idhari, from Marrakech, completed his two-tome, 700-page *Al-Bayan al Maghreb* [34] in 1312, and lived in close proximity-–physically and chronologically—to the birthplace of the Almohad dynasty. Huici Miranda argues that because Idhari was beholden to the succeeding dynasty, the Marinids, and not the Almohad whom they replaced, his account presents an objective depiction of Almohad history. In fact, Idhari on numerous occasions, when hindsight would have allowed him to condemn actions taken by the Almohad, provides a relatively non-partisan view of events. While little is known of Idhari, his is considered the most detailed narrative of Arab/Berber origin, and his work contains information not found in either Khaldun or Christian sources, and as such it is central to understanding the Almohad dynasty. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), born in Tunisia to a wealthy Andalusian Arab family, is most famously known for *Al-Muqaddima,*[35] and is considered the most insightful historian of the period. Khaldun, as opposed to many Arab sources, is regarded as objective and considered in his narratives. Additionally, his model of how kingdoms were established and declined was formed from his study of the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties.

As stated earlier, *Al-Mann bil-Imama, Al-Bayan al Maghreb,* and *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista volumen iv* are foundational primary sources for our understanding of the Almohad movement. Much of the credit for bringing these works

[34] Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, Abu al-Abbas Ahmad Ibn Muhammad, *Al Bayan al-Mugrib fi ijtisar ajbar mulk Al-Andalus wa Al-Magrib (Los Almohads)*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Tetuán: Editora Morocco, 1953).
[35] Ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami, Abu Zayd ‘Abd al-Rahman, *The Muqaddimah*.

into wider circulation goes to Ambrosio Huici Miranda (1880-1973), who translated these and other important Arabic documents into Spanish. It could be argued that Huici Miranda was overshadowed by two of his contemporaries, Reinhart Dozy (1820-1883) and Menéndez Pidal (1869-1968). Dozy and Pidal created the foundation upon which much of the subsequent historiography of medieval Iberia is based, and they are still widely cited and discussed.[36] Dozy, in particular, uncovered and translated many original Arab documents and Huici Miranda acknowledges his debt to this historian's foundational efforts. The corner stone of Islamic Spanish history, Dozy's *Spanish Spain*,[37] terminates with the end of the *taifa* period; however, if the Almohad empire is to be understood within the larger *Reconquista* narrative, historians must still rely on Dozy, as he translated many of the Arab sources from North Africa.

As regards the Almohad, Huici Miranda is universally appreciated as one of the premier scholars of this period and his work is still referenced.[38] Not only did he translate into Spanish the three works mentioned above, but he also translated the anonymous *Al-Hulal al Mawsiyya, Crónica árabe de las dinastias Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin,*[39] and *Rawd Al-Qirtas*, by Ibn Abi Zar.[40] The anonymous *al-Hulal* was finalized in 1381

36 For an excellent summary of the Almohad historiography by Spanish historians see Isabel O'Conner, "The Fall of the Almohad Empire in the Eyes of Modern Spanish Historians," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, no. 2 (2003): 145-162. She traces the view of the Almohad from Cordero in the late 1800s to Pidal and Dozy; she also outlines the dispute between Alborñoz and Castro. She recognizes the value of Huici Miranda's foundational work and his relative objectivity when compared to the previous generation of historians. As mentioned in footnote no. 16, for a thorough review of the Almohad primary sources see Gaspariño García, "Las fuentes de la historia Almohade*,"* 25-49.

37 Reinhart Dozy, *Spanish Islam*, trans. Francis Griffin Stokes (London: Goodword Books, 1913).

38 Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 198; Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire*; José Ramírez del Rio, "Documentos sobre el papel de los árabes Hilalies en el al-Andalus Almohade: traducción y análisis," *Al-Qantara* 35, no. 2 (2014): 360.

39 A*l-Hulal al Mawsiyya, crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Tetuán: Editora Marroquí, 1951).

40 Ibn Abi Zar al-Fasi, *Rawd Al-Qirtas*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Valencia: J. Nácher, 1963), 16-18.

and is recognized as primarily a compilation of other authors such as Ibn Qattan and Ibn Sahib mentioned above, whereas *Rawd Al-Qirtas* was finalized in 1348 out of Fez. Both Dozy and Huici Miranda recognize little value in *Rawd al-Qirtas*, referring to it as "very fallible" and "prone to exaggeration."

Two other first-hand primary sources, *Al Baydhaq* and *Al-Muqtabas min kitab al-Ansab,* unfortunately for non-Arab speakers, have not been translated into Spanish or English; however, Huici Miranda does incorporate much of these authors' works and insights into his histories and commentary. The first, *Al Baydhaq,* composed in 1150 by one of the original Almohad converts, Abu Bakr b. Ali al-Sanjhaji, provides insights into the philosophy of Ibn Tumart, his early travels, and the background to the foundation of the empire. The second, *Kitab al-Ansab,*[41] written by Abu Salih b. Abi Salih 'Abd al-Halim al-Masmudi, preserves the genealogy of the organization of the Almohad, most critically that of Ibn Tumart and Abd al-Mu'min. It contributes a detailed report of the Masmuda tribes of the Almohad and importantly the tribe of Abd al-Mu'min, the Kumiya. This compendium established the link of Ibn Tumart and Abd al-Mu'min with the tribe of the prophet Mohammad, although most historians agree that this connection is at best a hypothesis, and more realistically a fabrication.

2.2 Secondary Sources, Huici Miranda

Ambrosio Huici Miranda's two-volume work, *Historia del imperio Almohad* and his *Las grandes batallas de la reconquista durante las invasiones Africanas (Amorávides,*

[41] First extant copy made in 1314.

Almohades y Benimerines),[42] are contemporarily sourced as authoritative histories of the period. Huici Miranda's value is that his translator's instincts and attention to detail are apparent in his scrutiny of historical events, and he provides clear insights into the Arab authors he translated; he is quick to point out their inconsistencies and exaggerations, as he is of Christian sources as well. One can particularly appreciate that he walked the fields of the battles that he described, often dispelling exaggerated rhetoric through simple observation. For example, he dismissed the idea that the Almohad "surprised" Alfonso at Alarcos, as the battlefield itself is an open plain with no opportunity for either combatant to mount an unanticipated attack.[43]

As with most historians of this period who write about the Almohad, Huici Miranda relies heavily on Ibn Khaldun as a serious source; however, he also respects Ibn Idhari as a reliable chronicler of the time. Huici Miranda triangulates all information available to him to arrive at a sober and objective evaluation of what occurred, avoiding a *Reconquista* polemic which might exaggerate the strengths or weaknesses of either side of the conflict. Huici Miranda represents a key contributor to the historiography of the Almohad and he uses many of the original sources, such as *Al Bayan* and *Al-Mann Bil-Imam,* but also others that have yet to be translated into a European language. He references Dozy on many occasions and while complimentary of this great scholar, with whom he was a colleague and collaborator, he does not shy from voicing disagreements with him when the need arises. On the occasions he does disagree, it is often because he

[42] Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*; Huici Miranda*, Las grandes batallas de la reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines).*
[43] Huici Miranda, *Las grandes batallas de la reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines)*, 12.

had access to later material unavailable to Dozy, which he is quick to acknowledge. While Huici Miranda occasionally can lapse into certain prejudices of his time, one has to acknowledge that in general he is a reliable historian of this period. Finally, Huici Miranda brings added perspective to the discussion of the Almohad by utilizing sources and insights that describe what occurred in the Christian kingdoms and how they dealt with their southern neighbors and each other.

2.3 Secondary Sources, Other

In addition to the outpouring of scholarly articles on the Almohad since 2000, two books have been published in the last ten years: Allen Fromherz's *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire* (2000)[44] and Amira Bennison's *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires* (2016).[45] Both are thoroughly researched; Fromherz focuses on the philosophical underpinnings of Almohad ideology, and Bennison provides well-documented insights into both dynasties' economic and cultural dynamics. Bennison does much to refute previous facile characterizations of these regimes and from the outset describes them as important dynasties of the period.[46] She details their social, religious, artistic, and architectural accomplishments, and how they developed their economies through irrigation, agriculture, grain harvesting, and the Saharan gold and salt trade.[47]

The other monograph that merits mentioning is David Wasserstein's *The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain, 1002-1086*.[48] While this

44 Allen J. Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire* (London: IB Tauris, 2010).
45 Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*.
46 Ibid., 1.
47 Ibid., 184-189.
48 David Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain, 1002-1086* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

was published earlier (1985) than the two works mentioned above, it is indispensable to the understanding of the Berber invasion of al-Andalus. It was after the fall of the Umayyad dynasty (1031) that al-Andalus shattered into thirty-eight separate kingdoms, or *taifas* (parties).[49] Wasserstein points out that unexpectedly a competition emerged among many of these rulers to create higher culture, and the arts were sponsored and flourished. Separately, he demonstrates that this fragmentation—divided by tribe, ethnic groups, and the convenience of geography—weakened the Muslims and made them vulnerable to the Christian north. It was during this period that the Christian kingdoms, primarily Castile, demanded *parias* (tribute) of these Muslim city-states, which eventually led the party kings to invite the Almoravid to enter Spain, resulting in the consolidation of al-Andalus under their rule. As the Almoravid grip began to weaken; however, al-Andalus once again broke apart, albeit in a more consolidated fashion. Glick estimates that there were seventeen city-states during the second *taifa* period.[50] While Wasserstein's does little to illuminate the reasons for the Almoravid and Almohad rise to power, he does establish how the *taifa* kingdoms came to be, what their strengths and weaknesses were, and why the *taifa* period in Iberia was such fertile ground for the invasions of the Berber dynasties.

Since 2000, many scholarly papers have been published that analyze previously underexplored aspects of the Almohad. Damien Smith and Michael Lower have written about the activism of the papacy, the rallying of Christians in the Battle of Las Navas de

[49] Ibid., 83-98.
[50] Thomas Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1979), 47-48.

Tolosa, and Rome's attitude towards Christian mercenaries in Muslim lands.[51] Damian Smith's "The Papacy, the Spanish Kingdoms and Las Navas de Tolosa," confirms the profound involvement of Innocent III and how he cajoled and threatened the Christian kingdoms to participate in this battle.[52] This article speaks to the attention and involvement of the Church in the northern kingdoms and Almohad affairs. Regarding the economy, David Abulafia's article, "Christian Merchants in the Almohad Cities," summarizes the trade relationship and strong commercial alliances that the Almohad had with the Genoese and other Italian city-states. Abulafia documents a fifteen-year agreement that the Genoese signed with the Almohad, whereby the Genoese were free to travel and trade in Almohad territory for a tax ranging from eight to ten percent. He also records that the Genoese and the Pisans both had *funduqs* (warehouses) in many of the major ports under Almohad control. This article provides crucial proof of how commercial relationships were carried out in an expedient fashion when necessary, and belies the notion of the Almohad were merely war-like fanatics, as the dynasty has often been positioned.[53]

Maribel Fierro, in "Alfonso X 'The Wise': The Last Almohad Caliph?," hypothesizes how Alfonso X of Castile (r. 1252-1284) may have borrowed from the Almohad universal philosophy in his approach to governing. This article sets out to establish the basis for the cultural impact of the Almohad in general, and specifically

51 Damien J. Smith, "The Papacy, the Spanish Kingdoms and Las Navas de Tolosa," *Annuario de Historia de La Iglesia* 20 (2011): 157-178. See also Michael Lower "The Papacy and Christian Mercenaries of Thirteenth-Century North Africa," *Speculum* 89, no. 3 (2014): 601-607.
52 Smith, "The Papacy, the Spanish Kingdoms and Las Navas de Tolosa," 157-178.
53 David Abulafia, "Christian Merchants in the Almohad Cities," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2010): 251-257.

their influence on the Castilian king. This essay highlights that great Muslim thinkers, the most notable of which was Averroes, thrived under the Almohad, and how this contribution to early medieval philosophy is often swept under the rug of history. Fierro delineates the major works of philosophy, medicine, botany, and logic that were produced by the Almohad dynasty, noting that from the outset their philosophy was based on learning. Finally, Fierro draws an intriguing parallel from the Almohad system of intellectual patronage and politics to that of Alfonso X. One example was that Ibn Tumart insisted that the Almohad daily prayers be written in the Berber vernacular, much as Alfonso X had done with *Castellano* in Spain. This at once underscores the exchange of ideas that occurred when these two cultures rubbed shoulders, and confirms the influence of Ibn Tumart's philosophy.[54]

Linda Jones, in her "The Preaching of the Almohads: Loyalty and Resistance across the Strait of Gibraltar,"[55] stresses the critical nature of the revolutionary ideas of Ibn Tumart on the Almohad religious practice, and also emphasizes the role that sermons, *khutba*, played in galvanizing the Almohad Berber tribes on both sides of the strait. She confirms that the *khutba* is a "genre of Arabic ritualized oratory that pre-dates Islam and was performed on important social occasions."[56] Jones argues that while much has been made of coinage, art, and architecture in the establishment of Almohad hegemony, the sermon has received scant observation. She believes that the preaching of the sermon

54 Maribel Fierro, "Alfonso X 'The Wise': The Last Almohad Caliph?" *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 175-198. See also Maribel Fierro, *The Almohad Revolution* (New York: Ashgate, 2012).
55 Linda G. Jones, "The Preaching of the Almohads: Loyalty and Resistance Across the Strait of Gibraltar" *Medieval Encounters* 19 (2013): 71-101.
56 Ibid., 73.

proved a critical cultural emulsifier of the Almohad tribes as they crisscrossed the Maghreb, and later as they moved into al-Andalus. Because of its pre-Islamic roots, coupled with its inextricable ties to Islam itself—the Quran means "to recite"—the power of oratory was not only culturally meaningful, but had implied roots back to Muhammad and helped to legitimize the constructed genealogy that the Almohad "discovered" for Ibn Tumart. Ibn Tumart spoke Berber and Arabic while preaching, and this made his new Islamic ideology accessible to the Atlas tribes, and one might argue that for the first time he allowed them to completely understand Islam. Indeed, it may have become a rite of passage; Jones quotes the Marinid chronicler, Ibn Abi Zar, saying that the Almohad "did not appoint anyone to the offices of *khatib* or prayer-leader who had not memorized the creed of the divine in the Berber [language]."[57] This linkage of revolutionary ideas of Ibn Tumart to the Berber vernacular and to preaching ultimately provided the substrate upon which the communication of philosophy, laws, and propaganda were disseminated to the faithful.

Finally, much work has been completed that documents the establishment and growth of the Christian military orders and how they functioned within the *fueros* during this period. The seminal work regarding *fueros* was written in 1847 by Tomas Romero y Muñoz: *Colección de fueros municipales de los pueblos de Castilla, León, Aragón y Navarra*.[58] This exhaustive compendium details the founding legal documents for these municipalities and enumerates their quantity; much of the subsequent studies source

[57] Ibid., 79.
[58] Tomas Muñoz y Romero, *Colección de fueros municipales de los pueblos de Castilla, León, Aragón y Navarra*.

Romero y Muñoz in their research. An example, *Fueros locales del reino de León (910-1230),* written by Santos Corones Gonzalez, provides an in-depth view of the *fueros* of León.[59] Both works mentioned above support the arguments made by the monograph of James Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1284*,[60] and the article by Carlos Martínez Ayala, "Frontera y órdenes militares en la edad media Castellano-Leonesa (Siglos XII-XIII)."[61] Powers, and more recently Ayala, contribute in-depth analysis of how the Christian military orders and the *fueros* worked synergistically, and demonstrate that it was in the precise moment of the Almohad presence in al-Andalus, and perhaps because of them, that the phenomenon of Christian militias, municipal expansion, and repopulation occurred.

These four sources—contemporary primary authors; near contemporary medieval historians; foundational Spanish historians such as Huici Miranda; and the recent scholarly work represented in Bennison and Fromherz—inform the history of the Almohad, how they came to power, what events they struggled with, and what led to their decline. The history of the Almohad and the Almoravid is receiving new scrutiny within the historical community and this attention has increased in the last decade. The most recent monograph of Bennison is an excellent example of this work, as is the detailed analysis of Buresi and El Aallaoui. The latter provides a guide to continued opportunities in the field. More analysis of Almohad primary documents to better understand their

59 Santos Corones González ed., *Fueros locales del reino de León (910-1230*) (Madrid: Agencia Estatal Boletine del Estado, 2018).
60 James F. Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1284* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
61 Carlos Martínez de Ayala, "Frontera y ordenes militares en la edad media Castellano-Leonesa (Siglos XII-XIII)," *Studia Historia, Historia Medieval* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2006).

administration and in particular how they managed the economy offer fertile ground for further study. Additionally, there is a growing interest in archeological work in Spain and Morocco, and this analysis can provide insights into day-to-day living, as well as population movements, to fill gaps that the written record is unable to accomplish. Marrying current research, more detailed review of primary documents, and archeological studies such as that of Messier, will provide deeper insight into the Almohad empire, how it grew and sustained itself, and why it declined.

This thesis will contribute to the historiography of the Almohad through the examination of the decline of their economy and how it accelerated their expulsion from al-Andalus and their eventual replacement by the Marinids in the Maghreb. The mounting strength of the Christian kingdoms' economies through expansion of the geography under their control, the advancement of their *fuero* programs, and the founding of Christian military orders critically weakened the Almohad. At the same time, the Almohad mining and agricultural productivity was deteriorating in the Maghreb which strained their tribal fissures and provided openings for religious ulema and Arab tribe dissent.

Chapter 3 Historical Background

3.1 Islam's Entrance into al-Andalus to the end of Umayyad Period (700-1031)

The original Umayyad caliphate in Damascus, which at the time included the Maghreb and al-Andalus, had entered and conquered the Iberian peninsula in 711, but subsequently lost control of their empire to the Abbasids in 750. The grandson of the Umayyad Caliph Hisham II (r. 724-743), Abd al-Rahman I (r. 756-788), escaped death from the Abbasids by swimming across the Euphrates,[62] and during a five-year sojourn through Egypt and North Africa, attempted to find an appropriate kingdom for the scion of a dynasty. Eventually, he made his way to the Maghreb and crossed to al-Andalus through the support of his mother's Berber tribe, the Nazfa.[63] Through negotiations with the Syrian, Arab, and Berber tribes already residing in al-Andalus, Abd al-Rahman secured his position and founded a dynasty that would last nearly 300 years (756-1031).[64] Abd al-Rahman I established his kingdom in Cordoba and 150 years later, under the rule of his namesake, Abd al-Rahman III (912-961), the eighth Umayyad prince, the capital would be described as the ornament of the world,[65] a title befitting one of Europe's largest cities.[66] Abd Rahman III also proclaimed a new Umayyad caliphate, in part in response to the Shiite Fatimids (909-1171) who had declared their own caliphate in

[62] David James, *A History of Early al-Andalus, The Akhbar Majmu'a* (London: Routledge, 2012), 76-77.
[63] Ibid., 77. His mother's name was said to be Rah or Radah. The Nazfa had spread out over a large part of Barbary, between Ifrīqiya and Fās, passing through the region of Constantine, Oran, Tlemcen and the Rīf. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzwel, W. P. Heinrichs, consulted online March 2020.
[64] Ibn al-Qutiya, *Early Islamic History*, trans. David James (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), 67-77.
[65] María Rosa Menocal, *Ornament of the World* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002). Menocal took the reference from how al-Andalus was described by a Hrotswitha, a German nun, to use for the title of her book.
[66] Paul Bairoch, Leon Batou, and Pierre Chevre, *The Population of European Cities 800-1500* (Geneva: Center of International Economic History, 1988), 18-21.

Ifriqiya in 909. During this period, Umayyad competition with the Fatimids for control of the Maghreb was intense,[67] as each negotiated and cajoled the leading Berber tribes to recognize their respective caliphates. The Umayyads supported the Zenata, and the Fatimids the Zirids;[68] however, neither sponsor-state led their clients to a consolidated victory or established hegemony over the Maghreb for an extended period.

3.2 The *Taifa* Period to the Battle of Sagrajas (1031-1086)

The Umayyad caliphate disintegrated when Abd Rahman III died in 961, and his weak son, Hisham II (r. 961-976), was left without an heir. During this era, referred to as the *taifa* period (1031-1085), al-Andalus shattered into thirty-eight separate city-states, and is best documented by Wasserstein's *The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings*.[69] As Iberia disbanded into smaller entities, these *taifas* were unable to defend themselves from the northern Christian kingdoms, in particular León-Castile, where Ferdinand I (r. 1037-1065) and his son, Alfonso VI (r. 1065-1109), were relentless in pursuit of *paria* payments in exchange for peace. The northern Christian kingdoms slowly drained the wealth of the independent city-states, such as Seville and Granada, as they levied increasingly heavier tribute demands. Ferdinand I and Alfonso VI not only exacted tribute, they also persistently pushed southward, taking Lemego and Viseu in 1055, and Coimbra in 1064. This aggression would culminate in what would be considered the

67 Ibn Hayyan, *Crónica del califa 'Abdarrahman III an-Nasir entre los años 912 y 942 (al-Muqtabis V),* trans. M. Jesus Viguera and Federico Corriente (Zaragoza: Anubar Ediciones, 1981), 345-346.
68 A Sanhaja tribe from the Maghreb.
69 Wasserstein, *The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings.*

crowning achievement of the Christian North for the next 120 years, when Alfonso VI conquered the original Visigoth capital of Toledo in 1085.[70]

The contemporaneous chronicle of the last Zirid King of Granada illustrates the impact the tribute demands had on these city-states. In his biography, *Las memorias de 'Abd Allah, ultimo rey Ziri de Granda, detronado por los Almorávides (1090),*[71] Ibn Buluggin explains how he paid Alfonso 50,000 *meticales* to stave off the invasion of Granada.[72] 'Abd Allah, in his eye-witness account, later describes how Alfonso used the same form of pressure to cause the fall of Toledo and force its Muslim leaders "into misery."[73] According to the first-hand account of the Archbishop Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada, Alfonso's siege of Toledo lasted seven years; during the last four of which he systematically destroyed their fields and vineyards to force the city into Christian hands.[74] Alfonso had patiently planned the taking of Toledo and this acquisition would reverberate in the chronicles of Muslim and Christian scribes for the next hundred years.[75]

70 *The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile*, xxi.
71 Ibn Buluggin, 'Abd Allah, *Las memorias de 'Abd Allah, último rey Ziri de Granada.*
72 Ibid., 157. These meticales are not explained but it must refer to pieces of gold, probably Almoravid dinars.
73 Ibid., 162-163. See also Huici Miranda*, Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones Africanas,* 20.
74 Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España*, 247-248.
75 *The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile*, 4. "The Lord God inspired him with the salutary counsel to besiege Toledo, whose situation he knew very well because, while he had lived there, he had carefully scrutinized its innermost and most secret places. For many years therefore he prudently attacked it, laying waste to its crops and destroying all its fruits every year. At length, compelled by the power of God, the Toledan Moors surrendered their city to King Alfonso, honorably receiving him as lord and king, on condition that he allow them to remain in the city, retaining their houses and possessions and serving him as king." See also Francisco Ruiz Gómez, *Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2003), 86. Toledo had 28,000 inhabitants, 19,000 of which were Muslim and 4000 were Jews.

The helplessness of the *taifa* kingdoms before the growing strength of Castile-León forced their hands, and they called upon the Almoravid for aid. The conquest of Toledo made it clear to the remaining *paria*-paying *taifa* kings that it was only a matter of time before they too would succumb to Alfonso. With this in mind, they called upon—whether separately or together is of some debate—the Almoravid to come to their rescue. The first to appeal for help was Yusuf, the king of Badajoz,[76] and 'Abd Allah of Granada was quick to follow with a plea of his own. This was not an easy decision for these independent kings. When warned by one of his ministers that he risked losing control of his kingdom to their southern allies, the ruler of Seville, al-Mu'tamid Muhammad (r. 1069-1095), famously stated that he would rather be a sheepherder than a pig farmer.[77] This was presumably after his attempt to placate the Castilian king, by sending his daughter to be Alfonso's bride as a peace offering, had failed to stem the Christian demands.[78] She, according to Archbishop Rada, "fell hopelessly in love with Alfonso," converted to Christianity, and bore him a son as a result. Alfonso was also awarded the castles of Caracuel, Alarcos, Consuegra, Mora, Ocaña, Oreja, Uclés, Huete, Amasatrigo, and Cuenca, apparently as part of the dowry.[79] The constant pressure from Castile and

76 Huici*, Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines*), 28.
77 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 59. "Prefiero, por Allah, apacentar camellos y no cerdos."
78 Later historians believe it to have been Mu'tamid's daughter-in-law not his daughter.
79 Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España*, 228, "…caso Alfonso con Ceyda, hija del rey Abenabeth de Sevilla, que tras ser bautizada, cambio su nombre por el de María. Esta, que había oído de las grandes hazañas de Alfonso, aunque no lo conocía en persona se enamoro perdidamente, hasta el extremo de abrazar la fe cristiana y entregar en poder de Alfonso los castillos que su padre regalado. Los castillos que dio a su marido son estos: Caracuel, Alarcos, Consuegra, Mora, Ocaña, Oreja, Uclés, Huete, Amasatrigo y Cuenca. Y tuvo un hijo llamado Sancho, al que había confiado al conde García de Cabra."

their lack of success staving off Christian advances forced the *taifa* kings to negotiate with the Almoravid to come to their aid.

Why the Almoravid? How had they evolved to be powerful enough to afford an adventure in al-Andalus? The Almoravid had united the Far Maghreb under one leadership, which neither of the Umayyad nor Fatimids before them could. Because of their strength, which will be evaluated shortly, the Almoravid were invited to al-Andalus to help resist the northern advance. Through a series of emissaries and negotiations[80] the Almoravid landed in Ceuta,[81] and al-Andalus quickly realized the benefit of their presence when they won the battle of Sagrajas (1086).[82] Alfonso, buoyed by his domination of the *taifa* states and the taking of Toledo the previous year (1085), had intrepidly decided to take the field against much greater numbers. Before the battle, when asked by the Almoravid ruler, Yusuf Ibn Tashfin (r. 1061-1106), if he would prefer to submit to Islam rather than fight, Alfonso haughtily replied: "Such a letter as this! After my father and I have taken tribute payments from the people of your religion for eighty years!"[83] This defeat surprised Alfonso, and Huici Miranda suggests that his troops, accustomed to the weak response of the *taifa* armies, had chosen to enter this battle even

80 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 62-66-67.
81 Ibid., 66.
82 Huici Miranda, *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines*), 48.
83Ibid., "Yusuf siguiendo las normas de la sunna, escribió a Alfonso, haciéndole una triple proposición: o convertirse al Islam o someterse a tributo o aceptar el combate. En esa carta le decía según el Hulal: 'me he enterado ¡Oh, Alfonso!, de que querías que nos encontrásemos contigo y que deseabas tener una embarcación para pasar el mar en ella hacia nosotros, pero nosotros lo hemos pasado hacia ti y Dios no ha reunido contigo. Veras las consecuencias de tu petición, pues la petición de los infieles no es sino extravió.' Cuando llego la cara a Alfonso y oyó lo que le escribía, se agrio el mar de su cólera, y dijo, '! una carta como esa me dirige a mi cuando yo y mi padre imponemos las parias a la gente de su religión hace ochenta años!' Juro que no dejaría el lugar en que acampo y dijo: 'que avance [Yusuf] hacia mi, porque me desagrada el encontrarlo cerca de una ciudad que lo proteja y me impida de el, y no saco mía fan de matarlo y cumpla en el mi deseo. Entre mi y el hay una amplia llanura."

though they were significantly outnumbered.[84] The Berber victory not only signaled the end to the *taifa* period, but the rise of the Almoravid in al-Andalus.

3.3 The Rise and Fall of the Almoravid (1040-1147)

The Almoravid were the first indigenous Berber tribe to consolidate the Maghreb. The rise of the Almoravid can be traced to the renewal of the Sunna-Maliki Islamic belief system, coupled with increased economic output from the Saharan trade routes. It is difficult to separate the religious from the secular in this dynastic story as the religious, military, and economic strategies all worked synergistically to build the Almoravid kingdom. Abd Allah b. Yasin (?-1059), the founder of the Almoravid, was a Berber cleric who had been recruited to be the Sanhaja's imam, as their leadership knew that their understanding of Islam was weak at best.[85] Yasin had spent seven years in al-Andalus where he was inculcated with the Maliki-Sunna school of Islam, but what is often overlooked by historians, is that he also experienced the Umayyad bureaucratic machine, even as it crumbled.[86] He appears to have taken these lessons to heart as he established the Almoravid state. Al-Bakri and Abi Zar both refer to the actions taken by Yasin as he

[84] Ibid., 70-71.
[85] Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires,* 27. The foundational narrative begins with Yahya b. Ibrahim, the Gudala chief, on his return from his pilgrimage to Mecca, making a stop in Qayrawan to ask the renowned Maliki scholar, Sheikh Abu 'Imran al-Fasi, if he could send one of his pupils to teach the Gudala people more about Islam. As he apparently had no takers to sojourn to the arid, difficult clime of the desert, Sheikh Al-Fasi offered to send a letter to Waggag b. Zalwi who led a religious settlement in the High Atlas mountains close to the Zanhaja lands. Waggag, in turn, suggested that Yahya enroll 'Abd Allah b. Yasin for this educational task as he was already recognized as a charismatic religious leader with over 70 fervent followers. This lead the Gudala leader to appoint 'Abd Allah b. Yasin as his tribe's imam.
[86] N. Levitzion and J. F. P. Hopkins, eds., *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Princeton: Markus, Wiener Publishers, 1981), 406. Ibn Yasin was in al-Andalus from 1031 to 1038. From here forward this reference will be referred to as *Corpus*.

instituted religious rigor amongst the Sanhaja and imposed the required Islamic taxes.[87]

Riwad al-Qirtas records it simply:

> …then he taught them the Koran and the Islamic laws, he imposed upon them the need to pray, the ten percent alms required, with which he constructed the treasury, in which with the collected money he acquired soldiers, bought arms and attacked the other tribes until they conquered the entire Saharan country, aggregated the spoils of the dead and distributed it to the Almoravids.[88]

Yansin's state-building instincts were apparent from the outset and the above clearly verifies the marriage of religious cohesion and the building of a governing framework. Religion played a significant role in the events which unfolded; however, what is lost in many accounts is that this represented the first time that the Sanhaja Berber tribes were taught Islam by one of their own, Ibn Yasin, and not by an Arab imam, who historically would have treated them as second-class Muslims. Ibn Yasin created what Ibn Khaldun had labeled *asabiya,* or "group feeling and cohesion," within the tribes, in part because he was a Berber speaking to Berbers. Uniting the tribes presented no mean task. Ibn Hawqal (d. 978) in his *Surat al-Ard* ("Picture of the World") asserts that: "The Berbers of the Maghreb are divided into tribes of which the number cannot be counted precisely and it is impossible to know all of them for their clans are too numerous and the ramifications of their kin and tribes are too complicated, and also because they are dispersed in the depth of the deserts."[89]

87 Ibn Abi Zar al-Fasi, Abu al-Hassan 'Ali, *Rawd Al-Qirtas*, 237.
88 Ibid., 24. "Luego, les enseñaba el Alcorán y las leyes islámicas y les imponía la oración, la limosna legal y el diezmo, para lo cual constituyó una casa de la Hacienda, en la cual reunía el dinero y con él se procuraba soldados, compraba armas y atacaba a las cábilas, hasta que se apoderó de todo el país del Sahara, asumió el mando de sus cábilas, reunió los despojos de los muertos en estas guerras y los dio en botín a los almorávides." My translation.
89 Ibn Hawqal in *Corpus*, 48.

If Yasin provided the spiritual leadership with a state-building tendency, Yusuf Ibn Tashfin (r. 1061-1106) was the technocrat who, although an outstanding leader in the field, was also a skilled planner and builder. Over his forty-year reign he leveraged and expanded the spiritual and state apparatus, fashioned by Yasin, to create a dynasty.[90] These were not "marauding nomads without a plan"; in 1070, eight years after taking Sijilmasa, the Almoravid built one of the storied cities of the Maghreb, Marrakesh, and this became their capital.[91] Ibn Tashfin, now fully in control of the Almoravid, established Marrakesh as a base from which to manage his empire, and from here he sent his warriors north to conquer Fez (1070), Tlemcen (1075), and al-Andalus (1090). What the historiography lacks is the perspective that the Almoravid had accomplished what had never been achieved before: they united the Sanhaja tribes and controlled the economy. It was upon these two pillars that they built a state and sustained a dynasty. The Almoravid's rule appealed to the tribes of the Maghreb for three reasons: first, they promised to limit taxes to those only authorized by God (previous regimes had imposed taxes that were not authorized by Islamic law); second, they offered to wage war against

90 It is worth noting that Tashfin's native tribe, the Lamtuna, had a reputation as fearless warriors. Idhari and Ibn Hawqal concur: "…they displayed great vigor and bravery such as no others showed. They preferred death to retreat and as far as memory can reach, they never fled from an advancing enemy. They fought on camels rather than horses but most of them were foot-soldiers drawn up in rank after rank…" (Ibn Idhari in *Corpus*, 219). "They have a fine physiques and strength and toughness, the women as well as the men. Nobody has ever seen the face of any of them, nor of the Sanhaja, except for their eyes, for they don the veil (*litham*) when they are children and are brought up with it. They consider that the mouth is something shameful, like the privy parts, because of what issues forth from it, since in their opinion what emanates from the mouth smells worse than what emanates from the privy parts" (Ibn Hawqal in *Corpus,* 49). Much has been made of this veiling, as it distinguished the Almoravid from the Almohads and from their co-religionists in al-Andalus. This veiling was thought of as unconventional by the Muslims of al-Andalus and Ibn Tumart, the spiritual founder of the Almohad, had made fun of this practice. There was some attempt by the Almoravid to explain this practice as part of their founding mythology as part of their ancestors' escape from the Arabian peninsula, but one wonders if it did not stem from simply traveling extensively in the desert and protecting themselves from wind, sand, and heat.
91 *Corpus*, 227.

the infidel; and third, they guaranteed distribution of the rewards. These three promises would be echoed, in a varied form, by the Almohad.

These assurances could only be honored if the Almoravid could secure a source of wealth to feed, equip, and pay an army. The Almoravid conquered the economic triangle of southwestern Maghreb of Awdaghust (1054), Sijilmasa (1062),[92] and Taghaza (1076), dominated the gold, salt, and slave trade, and as result were able to construct a new state and sustain a dynasty. Messier and Miller emphasize that to control salt meant to control gold. They referred to this exchange as "The Saharan Trade Triangle": manufactured goods for salt; salt for gold; gold for manufactured goods.[93] Even before the Almoravid movement and the aggregation of tribes, the Sanhaja had dominated much of the salt trade because of their control of the city of salt, Taghaza.[94] The great travel-historian Ibn Battuta (1352) explains its importance in his eye-witness account:

> One of its marvels is that its houses and mosque are of rock salt and its roofs of camel skins. It has no trees but is nothing but sand with a salt mine. They dig in the earth for the salt, which is found in great slabs lying one upon the other as though they have been shaped and placed underground. Nobody lives there except the slaves of the Masufa who dig for the salt. …The Sudan use salt for currency as gold and silver is used. They cut it into pieces and use it for their transactions. Despite the meanness of the village of Taghaza they deal with qintar upon qintar of gold there.[95]

The symbiotic relationship between gold and salt is further supported by an earlier account conveyed by Ibn Hawqal (~ 977):

> [The] king of Awdaghust maintains relations with the ruler of Ghana. Ghana is the wealthiest king on the face of the earth because of his treasures and stock of

92 *Corpus*, 227.
93 Ibid., 109-110.
94 Ronald A. Messier and James A. Miller, *The Last Civilized Place: Sijilmasa and its Saharan Destiny* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 109.
95 *Corpus*, 282. This was more than likely a first-hand account of Ibn Battuta.

> gold extracted in olden times for his predecessors and himself. …They stand in pressing need of good will of the kings of Awdaghust because of the salt which comes to them from the lands of Islam. They cannot do without this salt, of which one load … may fetch between 200 and 300 dinar.[96]

One source goes so far as to report that gold could be traded on an equal weight-basis for salt and even as much as two weights of gold to one weight of salt.[97] Finally, salt contributed a vital source of nourishment for the Almoravid camel herds, and these "desert ships" provided the backbone upon which they maintained their caravan trade routes and economic strength.[98]

From this economic triangle, the Almoravid built and expanded their influence on trade throughout the Maghreb and beyond: "…Under the Almoravid in the mid 1000's, Sijilmasa gold became the coin of the realm throughout the Maghrib, the Mashriq, and Europe."[99] Numismatic studies reveal a rapid expansion of minted coins by the Almoravid, who at one point had constructed seventeen mints, six in the Maghreb and eleven in Spain.[100] This dwarfs the single mint that existed in Qayrawan under the Fatimids[101] and can be favorably compared to the Islamic caliphate in Baghdad of Harun al Rashid, who at the height of his administration had twenty mints.[102] The impressive output of gold currency continued through the reign of the first two caliphs and only

96 Ibn Hawqal in *Corpus*, 49.
97 Abu Hamid al-Gharnati in *Corpus*, 132.
98 *Corpus*, 268.
99 James A. Miller, "Trading Through Islam: the Interconnections of Sijilmasa, Ghana and the Almoravid Movement," *The Journal of North African Studies* 6, no. 1 (2001): 29.
100 Ronald A. Messier, "Quantitative Analysis of Almoravid Dinars," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* 23, no. ½ (1980): 109-111.
101 Ibid.
102 Andrew S. Ehen Kreutz, ed., "Monetary Change and Economic History in the Medieval Muslim World," *Seminar at University of Michigan* (1992): 216.

declined as the Almohad began to disrupt the Almoravid dynasty in the Maghreb.[103] Bennison writes that the state functioned "as an extraction machine with a bureaucratic apparatus geared towards gathering revenues, storing them, and disbursing a proportion of them….The State's primary role in the economy was tax or tribute collection, whether direct or by means of land grants."[104]

The Mediterranean commercial network between Spain, the Maghreb, and the Mashriq existed before the rise of the Almoravid and their ascension to power did not dampen this commerce.[105] In fact, the Almoravid's eventual control of the gold routes allowed them to establish the *murrabutin* as the coin of the realm for the Maghreb, Iberia, and much of the Mediterranean. The Geniza documents support this claim, as in one letter an employee asks permission to make the circular trade of gold for perfume for silk. He writes:

> …the Kohen of Fasi sent to me a bar of gold from Fez with the notification that he sold civet perfume for you for 7 ½ and 1/8 Andalusian mithqals. He asked me to sell the gold in Almeria and to buy silk with the proceeds. [106]

This letter, sent around 1110 at the height of the Almoravid reign, compliments five other missives from the *Letters of Medieval Traders* by Goitein, that mention Almeria. Three of these document the silk trade of some variety, indicating that silk production and distribution was thriving.[107] One such letter delineates four levels of silk quality, indicating the maturity of this market. Silk and silk fabrics made up the majority of

103 Messier, "Analysis of Almoravid Dinars," 113. Years are in Hegira.
104 Bennison, The Almoravid and Almohad Empires, 209.
105 Olivia Remie Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900-1500* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.
106 S. D. Goitein, trans., *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 50.
107 Ibid., 232, 252, 262.

exported textiles and olive oil was the major food export of al-Andalus (*zeit*, oil in Arabic, *Azeite*, in Spanish). Idrisi said that one could walk forty miles from Seville all under the shade of olive trees.[108]

Idrisi's observation of olive oil production is linked to the important work of Thomas Glick and his study of Islamic irrigation practices in al-Andalus. It was not, as he points out, that irrigation did not exist in Iberia before the arrival of the Arab and Berber conquerors; clearly it did. The innovation was the merchant class that implemented a centrally controlled system, which not only increased the potential area of irrigation, but also created a surplus so that they were able to accumulate wealth, increase trade, and urbanize. This, coupled with the second wave of gold imports, helped al-Andalus and the Maghreb maintain a long period of prosperity under the Almoravid.

The Almoravid eventually fell to the Almohad for four reasons. First, they were fighting a war on two fronts—the Almohad in the Maghreb and the Christians in al-Andalus. Second, these confrontations forced them to raise taxes, breaking one of their original promises and damaging their legitimacy. Third, now in retreat, having lost Toledo (1085) and Zaragoza (1118), the tax revenue and the flow of booty they had promised their followers vanished. This led to revolts by the Berber masses in al-Andalus and Christian sieges of Cordoba and Almeria (1146-1147), further eroding their credibility and ensuring a negative cycle that eventually led to the invasion of the Almohad.[109] And finally, their last two young and experienced kings could not curb the internal conflicts between tribes and left an opening for this competing tribal group. This

108 Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain,* 141.
109 Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the early Middle Ages,* 47-48.

should have served as a cautionary tale to the Almohad as three of these elements would be repeated towards the end of their reign: reduced tax revenue from al-Andalus because of loss of territory to Christian rivals; the succession of two teenage kings in the face of these economic declines; and third, a rival tribal, in this case the Marinids, who would take advantage of these weaknesses to sow dissent and mayhem.

3.4 Almoravid to Almohad Transition (1120-1147)

As he lay on his deathbed, Yusuf Ibn Tashfin, the architect of the Almoravid empire, provided his son with three imperatives to sustain control of the dynasty: first, do not disturb the Masmuda tribes of the High Atlas mountains; second, maintain peace with the Ibn Hud in al-Andalus, as they were a barrier between the Almoravid and the Christians; and finally, treat the people of Cordoba well.[110] His son, Ali Ibn Yusuf (r. 1084-1145), broke all three rules and this opened the door for the Almohad advance.

The Almoravid had established an indigenous ruling class, a strong economy, and a bureaucratic infrastructure. Buresi argues that Yusuf b. Tashfin was able to construct the first "post-tribal" model using military and religious authority to do so.[111] It was not inevitable that the Berbers would come to rule the Maghreb; although in hindsight, the idea that indigenous Berber rule would prevail should not come as a surprise, as they were the majority population. Understanding that the Almoravid shaped the first

110 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 96. "…La primera, que no inquietase a la gente del Daran, no los masmudíes que había tras las montaña (el Atlas) ni a los musulmanes ortodoxos; la segunda, que tuviese paz con los Banu-Hud y que los dejase interpuestos entre él y el país de los cristianos, y la tercera, que premiase a los que abrasen bien de la gente de Córdoba y les perdonase sus culpas."
111 Pascal Buresi, "Preparing the Almohad Caliphate: The Almoravids," *The Journal of Middle East Medievalists* 26 (2018): 155.

consolidate power in the region, the question could legitimately be asked, why and how did they succumb to the Almohad? The deterioration of their rule during their fourth generation, was not as systematic as Khaldun's formula. Clearly, the Almoravid no longer represented the rough champions that had emerged from the desert and consolidated the Maghreb; however, they had dominated the gold caravan routes and conquered al-Andalus. They now ruled an empire from their sedentary base in Marrakech and with these triumphs came additional pressures. Two of the main tenets for their continued success were, first, to be seen as jihadists against the infidel; and second, to be responsible fiscal leaders that would maintain equitable taxes.[112] These proved to be symbiotic objectives; as long as territory was being conquered, armies would be satisfied with their share of the spoils and taxes could be equitably maintained.

As his father before him, Ali Ibn Yusuf had put much store in fighting the Christians in al-Andalus.[113] The subsequent losses of Toledo and Saragossa indicated a change of momentum for the Almoravid in Iberia. The famous fifteen-month incursion (1125-1126) of Alfonso I of Aragon (The Battler) into Andalusian territory, raiding and terrorizing Granada, Valencia, Alcira, Denia, Murcia, Baza, Guadix, represented another example of this momentum shift and Almoravid weakness.[114] A certain contingent of Muwallad Christians and Jews from this territory had joined Alfonso's cause and this only served to make the Almoravid paranoid, stricter, and as a result, less popular. A portentous coincidence occurred, for as fate would have it, Alfonso's raid in al-Andalus

112 Ibid., 159.
113 Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 85.
114 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya, crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 109-115. See also Abun-Nasr, A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period, 109-115.

coincided with the beginning of the Almohad revolt in the Maghreb in the same year, when they descended from the Atlas to begin their rebellion.[115]

Forced to increase taxes to defend their territory, the Almoravid rescinded one of the fundamental planks of their rise to power. This, coupled with employing numerous Christian soldiers to fight the Almohad in the Maghreb, frayed the very cloth of their authority as rulers. This weakened legitimacy, substantiated by rebellions of Muwallad in both the Algarve and Cordoba, who revolted in part because of their discontent with the Almoravid's lack of response to Christian aggression, played into the Almohad hands.[116] The most famous rebel, the Sufi religious leader Ibn Qasim, the governor of Silves, coordinated his uprising with the Almohad and eventually converted to their movement.[117] But it was not only the loss of Toledo and Zaragoza that were fatal to the Almoravid; perhaps they would have been able to regroup in al-Andalus. The rise of the Masmuda tribe, the Almohad, the second of the deathbed-warnings Ibn Tashfin had given his son, would spell the end for the Almoravid.[118]

The Almohad, during the period of Ibn Tumart (r. 1120-1130), had conducted numerous raids that threatened, but did not overthrow, the Almoravid. These threats led the Almoravid to invest over 70,000 gold dinars to build a defensive wall around their capital, Marrakech.[119] With the aid of this wall, the Almoravid were able to resist the

115 Ibid., 109-115. See also Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 86.
116 Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahid Al-Marrakusi, *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista volument iv,* 169. See also Rachid El Hour, "La transición entre las épocas Almoravide y Almohade vista a través de las familias de ulemas," *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones de al-Andalus* 9 (1999): 262-263.
117 Ibid., 172.
118 Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal* (Harlow: Pearson, 1996), 183. See also Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages,* 47-48.
119 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya, crónica árabe de las dinastias Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 116.

Almohad at the battle of Buyhara (1130), where 100,000 Almohad laid siege to Marrakech for forty days. This resulted in a total disaster, for *al Hulal* reports that over 40,000 Almohad perished when the Almoravid sallied forth from their stronghold to punish them and push them back to their base at Tinmal.[120] The words of advisors who had warned of the Almohad *mahdi* must have been ringing in the ears of the Almoravid caliph, Ali Ibn Yusuf: "put this man, Ibn Tumart, in a room of steel or if you don't, you will spend a room of gold against him."[121]

Ibn Tumart would soon pass away, and after three years Abd al-Mu'min would emerge as the leader of the Almohad. This was not a foregone conclusion, as Ibn Tumart's two brothers initially resisted; Abd al-Mu'min came from one of the minority, non-Masmuda tribes of the assembled group, and had many internal competitors for his position. In the end, Abd al-Mu'min did prevail, and ten years after the death of the *mahdi*, he decided to pursue a more prudent military strategy. Instead of attacking the Almoravid capital of Marrakech, he began a campaign against the Almoravid's weaker territories: the foothills of the Sus and the Atlas mountains, between Marrakech, Fez, and the northern coast.[122] In 1140-41, he called upon his own tribe, the Kumiya, and the larger Zenata group of the northern Maghreb, to help combat the Almoravid in what was called the "campaign of seven years" (1140-1147).[123] The addition of the northern tribes was critical to his success but also introduced another source of power within the

120 Ibid., 137-139.
121 Ibid., 119. "Dios te conserve; pon este hombre en una habitación de hierro y si no, gastrás contra él una habitación de oro."
122 Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade* (Tetuán: Imprenta Marroquí, 1957), 121.
123 Ibid.

Almohad. During the seven-year war Abd al-Mu'min skirted the eastern flank of the Atlas mountains in areas such as Garis, Todga, and the valley of Ziz, avoiding the strongholds of the Almoravid, while continuing to gain momentum.[124] Through this offensive the Almohad threatened the northern trade routes that were outside the control of the nodal-city strongholds.

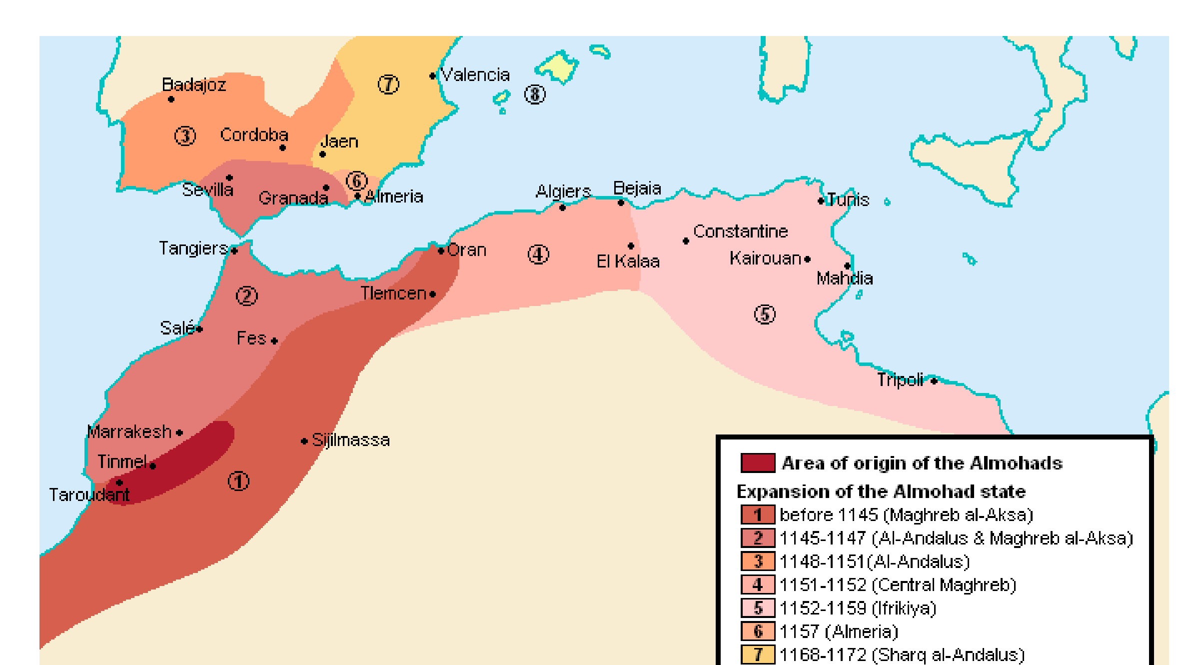
The Almohad had finally reached the sea at Oran and their continuous skirmishes had threatened the Almoravid to the point that their recently ascended king, Ishaq Ibn Tashfin (r.1143-1145), decided to confront them himself. This led to the final siege at Oran in which Ibn Tashfin was forced to flee, and in an attempt to escape he was captured and killed, leaving the majority of his troops to perish from thirst in Oran.[125] Ibn Tashfin's death led to an internal struggle for power among the two dominant Almoravid tribes: the Lamtuna and the Masufa.[126] "It was during this period that many of the Lamtuna and Masufa tribes fought amongst themselves; prices rose, and hunger invaded the country, while the tax base diminished because of this rebellion."[127] Abd al-Mu'min took advantage of this internal strife and the northern and central Maghreb was now under his control, as the major tribes and all the irregular troops ceded to his authority.[128] The result of the death of Ibn Tashfin and Abd al-Mu'min's victory fomented the

124 Ibid., 123.
125 Ibid., 158. 159-160, "Se produjeron ódios y disensiones entre las cábila de Lamtuna y Masufa… subieron los precios, invadió el hambre el país, disminuyeron los impuestos con esta rebelión…". Huici citing Lévi-Provençal: "Notes d'histoire almohade," 52, 71.
126 Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 128.
127 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 158. "Se produjeron ódios y disensiones entre las cábila de Lamtuna y Masufa…, subieron los precios, invadió el hambre el país, disminuyeron los impuestos con esta rebelión…". Notes. Huici citing Lévi-Provençal: "Notes d'histoire almohade," page 52 del texto y 71 de la traducción.
128 Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 136.

outbreak of an Almoravid civil war, in which many of the important sheikhs of the Almoravid, undoubtedly seeing the writing on the wall, defected to the Almohad, adding momentum to their gains in the northern Maghreb.[129]

Two puerile caliphs succeeded Tashfin, the last of which, Ishaq ibn Ali (r. 1147), was executed by the Almohad when they conquered Marrakech in 1147.[130] The Almoravid proved unable to withstand the combination of conducting a war on two fronts and a transition of power to two consecutive infant kings. This proved to be a premonition of what was to come for the more organized and powerful Almohad dynasty.

Figure 1. Area of Almohad Expansion [131]



129 Ibid., 128.
130 Ibid., 134.
131 Omar Toons, based on Georges Duby, *l'atlas historique mondial,* (Paris: Larousse, 1987).

3.5 Christian Iberia: Between the Innocents

3.5.1 Castile and Portugal

The period of the Almohad's occupation of Spain (1147-1228) might be easily labelled "Between the Innocents," as the papacies of Innocent II (1130-1143) and Innocent III (1198-1216) bookended it and marked an increased involvement of Rome in the political affairs of the peninsula. In fact, directly preceding this period, Alfonso VI, in an attempt to curry favor with Rome, had abandoned the Visigothic/Mozarabic rites in 1080, and introduced the Latin liturgy under the auspices of Cluniac monks.[132] This papal involvement shaped a two-way affair driven on the one hand by the Iberian monarchs' avidity for papal approval as a sign of legitimacy of their rule, and on the other hand, Rome's concern for the increased vitality of Islam. Alfonso VII and Alfonso VIII of Castile, as consecutive rulers of one of the more stable kingdoms in Iberia, longed to be recognized as the emperors of Spain by Rome, even while they were often respected by their fellow monarchs as *primus inter pares*.

It is impossible to separate the analysis the Almohad empire from al-Andalus, for this possession had the most potential for wealth and contained the most formidable threats to their existence. One can contemplate that had the Almohad been content to control the Maghreb, and sated their empire ambitions with campaigns to Ifriqiya and further east, they may have maintained their rule for a longer period of time. But this would not be the case. They looked northward, as would the Marinids after them, and

132 Amira K. Bennison, "Liminal States: Morocco and the Iberian Frontier Between the Twelfth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *North African Islam and the Mediterranean World*, ed. Julia Clancy-Smith (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 16. Aragon would do the same in 1071.

aspired to control the rich, expansive lands of al-Andalus. This passage by Abd al-Wahid provides an idyllic description of al-Andalus long held by the invading Berbers:

> It is the East of the suns of science and its moons are the center of its merits and the axis of its sphere. It is the country with the most temperate climate and the purest air; and the sweetest water and the most aromatic plants; and it is graced with soft mornings and afternoons. [133]

With the Almohad goals of expansion in mind, it is critical to understand the northern Christian kingdoms' responses to their occupation of al-Andalus.

In his *España del Cid* [134] Menendez Pidal argues, not unlike Alborñoz, for an eternal Spain, a Spain that existed from the time of the Visigoths and that "reunited the farthest province of Imperial Rome, and is the first political expression of the new idea of Spain."[135] Menendez Pidal notes that Castile of the thirteenth century had the clearest understanding of this vision.[136] In Menendez Pidal's view, Spain's history reached back to Alfonso III el Magno (866-910) who, as King of León, Galicia, and Pamplona, was revered by his subjects as "Imperator Nostro."[137] However, the assertion of an eternal Spain can seem puzzling when one reads of the splintering of the empire by Sancho the Great (r. 1000-1035), who at the end of his reign divided his kingdom into three realms to placate his offspring: Fernando I (r. 1037-1065) would gain León-Castile; Garcia Sanchez (r. 1035-1054) would obtain Navarre; and Ramiro I (r. 1035-1063) would be

133 Abd al-Wahid Al-Marrakusi, *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista volumen iv,* 119.
Es el Oriente de los soles de las ciencias y de sus lunas y el centro de sus méritos y el eje de su esfera. Es el país de clima más igual y de aire más puro y de agua más dulce y de plantas más aromáticas, el más grato por las mañanas suaves y por las tardes.
134 Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *La España del Cid* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1929).
135 Ibid., 59. "Después, el estado único, en que los visigodos reunieron la extrema provincia del Imperio de roma, es la primera expresión política de la nueva idea de España." All Spanish translations are mine.
136 Ibid., 58.
137 Ibid., 61.

awarded Aragon. The subsequent creation of Portugal by the energetic Alfonso I (r. 1128-1185), and the marriage of Petronilla of Aragon (r. 1137-1164) to Berenguer IV of Catalonia (r. 1131-1162) in 1131, which produced the greater Aragonese kingdom, added to the previously mentioned three monarchies.

While each had its own history and politics, the northern Christian polities existed in a milieu of intertwined blood, marriage, and heritage. The relationships, while at times cooperative, often remained typified by jealousy and double dealing. The kingdoms were as interested in expanding their territories at the expense of the Islamic kingdom(s) to the south, as they were in usurping land from their Christian neighbors, as witnessed by the division of Navarra by Castile and Aragon until Garcia "The Restorer" was named king in 1134. Castile, throughout the thirteenth century and beyond, maintained a vision of a united Spain, but typically this occurred at the expense of their co-religionists, who understandably did not share this vision with equal enthusiasm.

The division of Sancho the Great's kingdom in 1035 coincided with the founding of the Almoravid empire (1040). These divisions in many ways played into the hands of the invading Berber dynasties, as the shifting alliances allowed the Berbers to leverage one Christian kingdom off of the other. The Almohad would lose the advantage of their divide and conquer strategy during the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa campaign in 1212 because of the Christian kingdoms' cooperation. However, during the initial invasion of the Almoravid (1085) the five principalities of Portugal, Aragon, Catalonia, Navarre, and Leon-Castile were hardly aligned.[138]

[138] During the 163-year period of Almoravid and Almohad rule in al-Andalus (1186-1248), León-Castile were separate kingdoms for sixty-three years.

A consistent condition throughout the period of the Berber invasions was the internecine warfare of the northern kingdoms and the many treaties and alliances that they conceded to their southern neighbors, in particular with the Almohad. In addition to these treaties with the Muslims, they would often absent themselves from battle alongside their coreligionists, even if they had previously agreed to participate. After his defeat at Sagrajas (1086) and in his subsequent escape to Toledo, Alfonso VI (r. 1065-1109) called for help from Pedro I of Aragon and the famous Rodrigo de Vivar, El Cid, for fear of the continued advance of the Almoravid. Neither Pedro nor Cid would appear. Fortunately for Alfonso, a combination of pressing matters in the Maghreb, coupled with what assuredly would have been a long siege of Toledo, convinced Ibn Tashfin and the Almoravid to return to Seville.[139] Similarly, a hundred years later, the failure of reinforcements from León and Navarre to materialize in time to aid Alfonso VIII of Castile (r. 1158-1213) would lead to the defeat of Christian forces at Los Alarcos (1195).[140]

Alfonso IX of León (r. 1188-1230) had purposefully abandoned his cousin, Alfonso VIII of Castile, at Alarcos because he had reneged on an agreement to cede control to certain castles; however, this only provides part of the history between these two monarchs. Their relationship was fraught with agitation, stemming from the embarrassing denigration that Alfonso IX experienced at the hands of his older cousin,

[139] Bernard F. Reilly, *The Conquest of Christian and Muslim Spain, 1031-1157* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 93-94.
[140] Huici Miranda, *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines)*, 12. Huici Miranda believes the cause of this defeat was Alfonso's impatience and over-confidence, as he forged ahead alone.

Alfonso VIII, when forced to kiss his ring at Carrión and recognize his superiority.[141] The author of the *Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile* leaves little to the imagination:

> Meanwhile the king of León who was coming to the aid of the king of Castile came to Toledo; but on the advice of certain agents of Satan, he turned into a crooked bow and looked for reasons to abandon his friend. Once a friend, he now became the cruelest enemy. For he kept in the back of his mind what had happened to him in the curia celebrated at Carrión mentioned above. Pleased and rejoicing over the misfortune that had befallen the Castilians, he withdrew from Toledo, indignant with the glorious king because he had not given him certain castles he had demanded. He immediately allied himself with the king of Morocco, accepting money and a host of armed knights from him and made war upon the king of Castile.[142]

This meeting between the kings which pushed Alfonso IX into the arms of the "agents of Satan" preceded the Battle of Alarcos (1195), which would be the first major victory of the Almohad in al-Andalus. The Almohad would hail this triumph as an achievement greater than that of the Almoravid victory at Sagrajas, which not only emphasizes its significance, but also demonstrates that these large, open-field encounters remained in the collective memory on both sides of the divide for extended periods. Alfonso IX would subsequently use the loss of Alarcos as an excuse to invade Castile with the help of his Almohad allies.[143]

3.5.2 The Iberian Levant

The dynastic dynamics in the eastern peninsula proved to be just as complicated and arguably even more entwined with Rome. Alfonso I the Battler (r. 1104-1134) had

141 *The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile*, 22.
142 Ibid., 28.
143 Ibid. This was not the first time that Alfonso IX had combined forces with the Almohad against his co-religionists. He had also come to the defense of the Muslims during the siege of Badajoz (1147), allying himself with Abd al-Mu'min against Alfonso I of Portugal.[143] Ibn Sahib al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda (Valencia: Anubar, 1968), 144.

invaded al-Andalus in 1125, which led to further conflict with Almoravid and aided in their eventual demise. Critical to Alfonso's invasion was that it encouraged elements of the Muwallad and Jewish community to rebel, which left a permanent stain of suspicion of these communities in the minds of their Almoravid and Almohad conquerors, and in part led to the requirement of conversion or exile for many Jewish and Muwallad Christian subjects.[144]

Alfonso, upon his death, left Aragon to Rome, the Templars, and The Knights of St. John of Jerusalem.[145] This endowment was the result of the failed attempt to unite Castile and Aragon by the marriage to his cousin, Urraca (r. 1109-1126), the only surviving child of Alfonso VI of Castile. She had produced a son, Alfonso (later to become Alfonso VII of Leon-Castile), by her first marriage to Raymond of Burgundy, but when Raymond died, she was forced by her father, Alfonso VI, to marry Alfonso I in the failed pursuit of a Castile-León and Aragon union. She had resisted this pairing from the outset, and their notoriously contentious marriage ended with no issue in 1110. Politics put asunder what the papacy could not; their personalities and dynastic views proved incompatible and convinced them both to leave the union, something the admonishment of the church, for reasons of consanguinity, was unable to do.[146] As a result of his failed marriage to Urraca, coupled with his inability to produce an heir, Alfonso I willed his kingdom to the church and the Templars to keep Aragon out of the

[144] Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal,* 179-180.
[145] Elena Lourie, "*Alfonso I,* 'El Batallador' King of Aragon and Navarre: a Reassessment," *Speculum* 50, no. 4, (1975): 635.
[146] Ibid., 640. See also Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 247.

ever-ready hands of his ex-wife and her son Alfonso VII of Leon-Castile (r. 1126-1157). The bequeathing of the kingdom of Aragon to the church caused great consternation among the nobles of the realm and even the papacy understood that this was not a workable solution. Lourie argues convincingly that Alfonso not only misled many historians but the papacy as well, and only ceded his kingdom to the Roman See to stymie Alfonso VII of Castile-Leon's designs long enough for his brother Ramiro II (r.1134-1157) to sire an heir.[147] The church and the nobles understood that Alfonso's will was an unworkable solution and Ramiro II was called out of mothballs in the monastery to become king of Aragon. This monk-king's two major accomplishments were to reinstate the kingdom of Aragon and produce an heir, Petronilla (r. 1137-1164). Petronilla would eventually wed Ramon Berenguer IV (r. 1131-1162) of Catalonia, to create the combined kingdom of Catalonia-Aragon, the joining of which created one of the strongest oppositions to the Islamic kingdoms. Subsequent negotiation with the church and the Templars required Ramon IV to compensate the military and religious orders for losing their inheritance from Alfonso in order to smooth the path for the union with Aragon. Meanwhile, the Navarrese seized this opportunity to separate from Aragon, and installed as their king, Garcia "the Restorer" (r. 1134-1150), the bastard son of a Navarrese nobleman.[148] Both kingdoms, weakened by these transitions, were forced to

147 Ibid., 635-651.
148 *Crónica del Emperador Alfonso VII,* trans. and edit. Maurilio Pérez González, (León: Universidad de León, Área de Publicaciones, 2015), 113. See also Smith, "The Men Who Would be Kings: Innocent II and Spain," 189. See also Ruiz Gómez, *Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)*, 125.

render vassalage to Castile-Leon in order to regain territory held hostage by Alfonso VII in return for this recognition.[149]

Having declined the rights to the kingdom of Aragon, papal intervention would become more proactive as Innocent III (1198-1216) forbade Ramiro II's grandson, Pedro II (r. 1196-1213), to divorce Marie of Montpellier.[150] More importantly, after Pedro II's ignoble defeat and premature death at Muret in 1213, Innocent saved the offspring of this marriage, Jaime I. Jaime I's mother had died the same year as Pedro's defeat, and the heir apparent to the crown of Aragon, under complicated circumstances, had been left in the hands of the victor of Muret, Simon de Montfort (1175-121). Innocent III sent his right hand, Cardinal Peter Collivaccina of Benevento,[151] to insist that Montfort hand over Jaime or face the consequences. Cardinal Collivaccina adeptly managed the minority of Jaime I (r. 1213-1276),[152] and it was in this period that Innocent III, through his emissary Collivaccina, strong-armed the Aragonese and Catalonian elites to recognize Jaime and sign a set of agreements that held firm throughout his minority.[153]

The above is an example of papal intervention and proof that the influence of Rome, while not complete, was ever-present in Iberia. The Catholic monarchs of this period felt compelled to court Rome for legitimacy and aid when necessary. The example of Jaime I best represents the political intervention by Rome that ended, if Jaime I's dynastic results are taken as proof, in a success. However, many examples of the

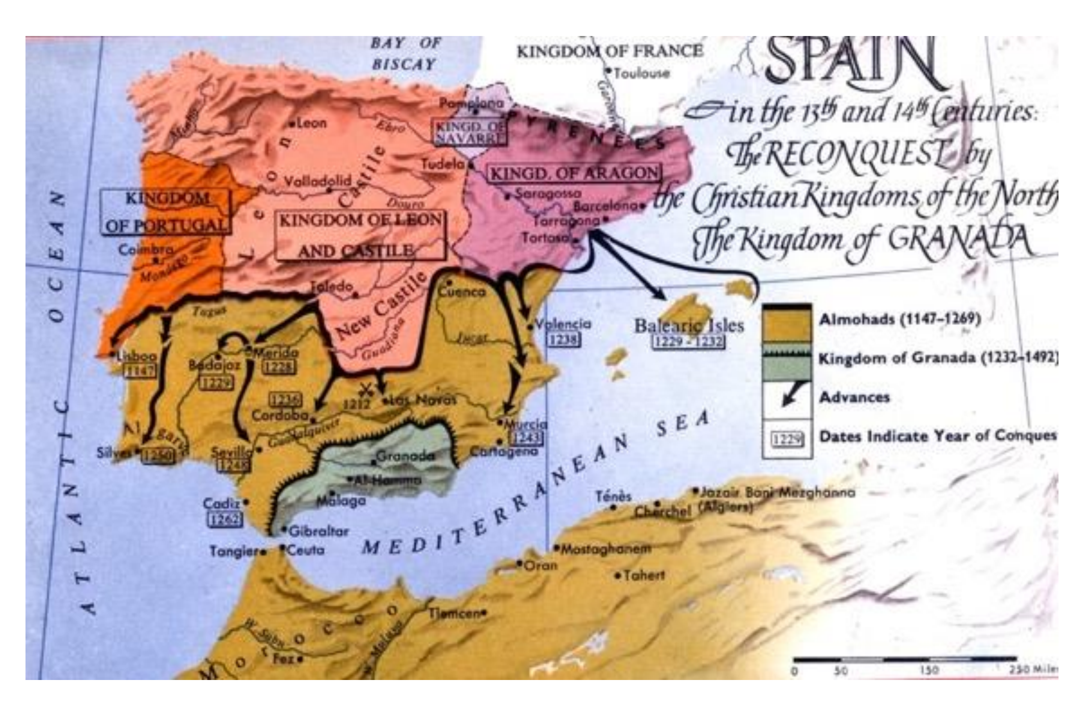
149 Ibid., See also Lourie, "*Alfonso I,* 'El Batallador' King of Aragon and Navarre: A Reassessment," 636.
150 Ernest E. Jenkins, *The Mediterranean World of Alfonso II and Peter II of Aragon* (1162-1213) (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2012), 94-101.
151 Damian J. Smith, "Pope Innocent III and the Minority of James I," *Annuario de Estudios Medievales* 30, no. 1, (2000), 24.
152 Damian Smith, *Innocent III and the Crown of Aragon* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), 146.
153 Ibid., 150-155.

monarchs ignoring the church's advice when these demands did not suit their political or familial needs are recorded. Innocent successfully denied the marriage of Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and Alfonso IX of Leon (1188-1230) based on their third degree of consanguinity,[154] as he had, on similar grounds, prohibited the marriage between the sister of King Sancho VII of Navarre (1194-1234) and Peter II of Aragon.[155] However, there continued to be cases in which marriages persisted with no regard for papal restrictions; the example of Urraca and Alfonso I described above was one such example.

As first cousins, Alfonso VIII of Castile, Alfonso IX of Leon, Sancho VII of Navarre, and Peter II of Aragon knew each other well and understood their respective desires for power, legitimacy, and territory. This intercalated world of family competition would continue for two centuries beyond the period of the Almohad, until the marriage of the Catholic Kings (1469), and even then territorial disagreements and competition would persist. These contentious relationships created opportunities for treaties on both sides of the religious divide and were acted upon by all parties in the peninsula.

154 Constance M. Rousseau, "A Papal Matchmaker: Principle and Pragmatism During Innocent III's Pontificate," *Journal of Medieval History* 24, no. 3 (1998): 265.
155 Ibid., 265.

Figure 1. The Kingdoms of Spain During the Almohad Reign of al-Andalus [156]



3.5.3 Almoravid Holdouts

The Iberian Levant did not only contain the Christian kingdoms of Navarra, Aragon, and Catalonia. Two Almoravid kingdoms that resisted the Almohad most fiercely were those of Murcia under Ibn Mardanis (r. 1147-1172) and the Ibn Ghaniya of the Balearics. Both kingdoms would conduct economic, political, and military triage to avoid Almohad dominance, signing commercial agreements with the Genoese and arranging military-political accords with their Christian neighbors whenever possible and convenient. Both had active ports, and while they were not as prominent as Almeria, Denia, Valencia, and Palma, all conducted active trade in the Mediterranean.[157]

156 Derek Davison, "Today in European history: the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212)," *Foreign Exchanges*, July 16, 2019. https://fx.substack.com/p/today-in-european-history-the-battle-cfd. León and Castile were ruled separately for sixty-three years of the Almohad presence in al-Andalus.
157 Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain,* 17-18.

Ibn Mardanis, El Rey Lobo (The Wolf King), a Muwallad whose family was believed to have converted to Islam in the tenth century,[158] used his military and political skills to create alliances with whichever northern Christian kingdom was most receptive to help him resist the advance of the Almohad, which he accomplished for over twenty-five years.[159] In essence, Ibn Mardanis maintained a *taifa* relationship with the North and he repeatedly paid to maintain his borders and sovereignty.[160]

Figure 2. Territory of Ibn Mardanis in al-Andalus [161]



[158] Maria J. Viguera Molins, "Sobre el nombre de Ibn Mardanis," *Al-Quantara* 17, no. 1 (1996): 231. In this article Viguera argues that this name is most probably hydronimous, most likely named after a river.
[159] Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, 12. See also page 78 for a description of some of the fiercest combat between Ibn Mardanis and the Almohad and Arab troops. In this instance he lost the battle but returned to his stronghold in Murcia to live another day.
[160] Ignacio González Cavero, "Una revisión de la figura de Ibn Mardanish: su alianza con el reino de Castilla y la oposición frente los Almohades," *Miscelánea Medieval Murciana* 31 (2007): 109. In 1170, two years before his death, Ibn Mardanis signed a pact with Alfonso VIII of Castile and Alfonso II of Aragon agreed not to attack his kingdom for five years for an annual tribute of 40,000 morabitinos a year.
[161] María Jesus Viguera Molíns, *Los Reinos de taifas y las invasiones Magrebíes (Al-Andalus del XI al XIII)* (Madrid: Editorial Mapfre, 1992).

He controlled his economy through the gold, silk, and olive oil trade conducted in the active ports of Denia and Valencia. In spite of the Genoese relationship with the Almohad, Ibn Mardanis signed a ten-year trade agreement with this Italian city-state in 1149, which was renewed in 1161.[162] He resisted the Almohad advances over the course of his reign and only upon his death (1172) did his heirs agreed to recognize the Almohad. The addition of Ibn Mardanis' holdings expanded the Almohad realms in al-Andalus substantially and after his death there was neither buffer nor reason to deter open conflict between the northern Christian kingdoms and the Almohad.[163]

Muhamad b. 'Ali Ghaniya (r. 1126-1165), the original governor of the Balearics, descended from the Almoravid leader Ali ibn Yusuf.[164] Similar to Mardanis, the Balearics had an economic base, coupled with their obvious physical barriers, that allowed them to maintain their autonomy for longer than any territory of the previous Almoravid Empire. Their strategic location in the Mediterranean secured their economic independence and in 1181 they were able to sign a treaty with the Genoese for commerce and safe-conduct, which was renewed in 1188.[165]

The Banu Ghaniya, tenacious warriors in their own right, would rule the Balearics uninterrupted except for a brief period (1184-1187), until they were finally conquered by the Almohad in 1203. Additionally, through contacts developed with the Arab tribes in North Africa, they attacked Ifriqiya and controlled most of what is modern day Tunisia

162 Olivia Remie Constable, "Genoa and Spain in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: Notarial Evidence for a Shift in Patterns of Trade," *The Journal of European Economic History* 19, no. 3 (1990): 640.
163 Ruiz Gómez, *Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)*, 211.
164 Zamora Jover, ed., *Historia de España, Menéndez Pidal*, 68-69.
165 Constable, "Genoa and Spain in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: Notarial Evidence for a Shift in Patterns of Trade," 641.

by 1187.[166] The Almohad reconquered Tunis in 1188 and the Ibn Ghaniya retreated south. When the Almohad caliph Abu Yusuf died in 1199, the Ibn Ghaniya rose again, only to have their movement permanently squashed in 1206 by the Almohad regional viceroy, Abdul Wahid. Abdul Wahid was the son of Abu Hafs 'Umar from the Hintata tribe, who was one of the original ten companions of Ibn Tumart, and he not only crushed the revolt, but his offspring would found the Hafsid dynasty (1229-1574).

3.6 Did the Crusades Affect the Almohad?

Urban II's call for the first crusade in 1095 came only ten years after the Almoravid victory at Sagrajas, and during the Almohad dynasty's control of al-Andalus (1147-1228) three additional eastern crusades would transpire (1147-1150; 1189-1192; 1202-1204). In the latter two, Spain received papal dispensation of sins and the Iberians were encouraged to remain in the peninsula to fight the infidel. Urban II's view of crusading was altered after the Almoravid invasion, and he recognized the inefficiency of sending Iberians to the Holy Land when Spain was under assault by Islam.

> If anyone of you, therefore, plans to go to Asia, let him try to fulfill the desire of his devotion here [Iberia]. For there is no virtue in delivering Christians from Saracens there while exposing Christians here to the tyranny and oppression of Saracens.[167]

The emphasis on crusades may have been brought about by the entrance of the Cluniacs into Iberia in the second half of the eleventh century,[168] and they possibly influenced the

166 Maria José Comora Jover ed., *História de España, Menéndez Pidal*, 99-100.
167 Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 33. See also Ruiz Gómez, "Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)," 212. Gomez underscores that Saladin's victory over Christian forces at the Battle of Hattin (1187) in the Holy Land, and Innocent III's competitive view versus heretics throughout Europe affected the papacy's view of Crusades in general and in Spain.
168 Ibid., 24.

Christian kings' adherence to the pope's advice. After the first crusade, Alfonso VII of Leon-Castile and Alfonso I of Aragon proclaimed their intentions to fight the holy war in Spain and be obedient to Innocent II.[169]

However, the crusades should be viewed through an Iberian lens, as few of the Christians or Muslims kingdoms in this region demonstrated ambition to regain or maintain the holy land. It should be argued that the Almoravid and Almohad invasions had more of an influence on the crusading mentality of the church than on the Iberian monarchs; however, these kings would take advantage of papal crusading fervor to gain dispensation and assistance when possible. This provides an example where the churches' desires and the Iberian monarchs' needs were in concordance. O'Callaghan argues that in the eyes of the Christian monarchs the *Reconquista* was not a war of conquest, but a war of repossession. The idea of converting Muslims to Christianity proved much more of a Northern European ideal than that of the peninsular Christians, whose major concern, in particular during the time of the Almohad, remained regaining territory and a tax base, rather than defending Christendom.[170]

Contemporary Iberian historians make little mention of the crusades in the primary documents. The Almohad were aware of the campaigns in the East, but they remained focused on conquest opportunities closer to home. In the instance mentioned by

169 Smith, "The Men Who Would be Kings: Innocent II and Spain," 184.
170 O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, 10-14. The papacy had a broader view of the threat of Islam against Christianity, which in turn influenced their encouragement of the Iberian Christian states to fight at home. Rome's rhetoric may have augmented the *idea* of the *Reconquista* as a religious war, but in action, the Iberian states responded in the same manner towards their southern enemy as they had before the crusading period. Peace treaties and alliances were struck in Iberia between the north and the south during the time of the crusades, depending on local needs and relative strength.

the sources in which the Almohad were given the opportunity to provide aid for the most famous Islamic defender against Christendom, Saladin, they demurred. In 1190 Saladin had sent a minister to Marrakech to request ships to resist the crusaders. The Almohad were gracious in their reception of Saladin's ambassadors, but their hospitality, praise, and gifts did not result in military support.[171] In fact, there is some evidence that Saladin and the Almohad may have viewed each other as rivals in the region, and perhaps the Almohad decided not to arm a potential competitor for Ifriqiya.[172]

To summarize the historical background, it is critical to understand that the Almohad had seven entities with which they had to fight, compromise, and negotiate. Al-Andalus, Ibn Madarnis, the Balearics, Ifriqiya, Portugal, Leon, Castile, Navarre, and Aragon/Catalonia represented competitors for territory within their realm. They battled and negotiated with all of them with varying success and once Ibn Mardanis fell in 1172, the Balearics in 1203, and Ifriqiya in 1206, the field was clear for the Almohad to face their Christian competitors which would lead to the fateful Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.

171 Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista, volume ii, Al-Bayan al-Mugrib fi Ijtisar ajbar muluk al-Andalus wa al-Magrib. Los Almohades*, tran. Ambrosio Huici Miranda, vol. 1 (Tetuan: Editora Marroqui, 1953), 167. See also Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 212. Amar S. Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads and the Banu Ghaniya* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 150.
172 Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads and the Banu Ghaniya*, 151.

Chapter 4 The Almohad

4.1 Thesis Introduction: The Rise and Fall of the Strangers

Ibn Khaldun concluded that dynasties began their decline by the fourth generation. Reportedly, he modeled the Almoravid and Almohad for this thesis, and it proved accurate that in both cases, material deterioration to their empires can be traced to the third and fourth generations of these Berber kingdoms. The three medieval kingdoms of the Maghreb, the Almoravid, the Almohad, and the Marinid, lasted 100, 150, and 250 years respectively, each building on the foundation of the other. Consistent with other medieval polities, they proved unable to make the transition from relationship politics and family-based dynasties to what would later be recognized as a state; this would not exist in the Maghreb for another 400 years, until the advent of the Alouite dynasty (1631-present).

Five potential fault lines of their rule must have been apparent to the Almohad leadership, and if not to them, with the clear view of hindsight, are apparent to history. First, they recognized the mercenary nature of the Arab tribes, a key component of their military. Second, they knew that a significant amount of population within their realms were Mawallad and Jews. These elements could potentially aid a revolt as they had in joining Alfonso I in his extended raid of 1125, or who had rebelled against the Almoravid on the side of the Almohad themselves. The opposing tribes within the Maghreb represented a third element of risk to their empire. Many non-Masmuda tribes had joined their cause, but this opportunistic loyalty remained contingent on the expansion of territory with the promise of remuneration and booty. A fourth challenge, the Maliki

ulema in al-Andalus, resisted the Almohad philosophy as it represented a direct affront to their Sunna school of Islam. While the initial Almohad reforms may have softened over time and distance as they crossed the strait, the 400 years of Maliki Sunna infrastructure of jurist and ulema did not disappear upon the Almohad arrival to Iberia. And finally, the inter-dynastic struggles from brothers, uncles, and cousins lingered as a constant threat to stability and will be discussed below.

These groups could be held together with a strong fiscal discipline that would pay for armies and satisfy disparate political entities critical for the long-term success of the Almohad. However, all the emulsifying elements of culture and philosophy combined could not overcome a weak economy, especially when coupled with an unexplainable military loss and weak leadership. During the period of the first three caliphs territorial expansion and fiscal incentives allowed the Almohad to suppress rebellions and satisfy potential disruptive elements, such as the Arab tribes. Once expansion was reversed, in particular losing their grip on al-Andalus, dissatisfied elements, such as the Zenata, began to rebel. A faltering economy opened the door for these rebellions and the infrastructure they built, described below, would not be sufficient to maintain the Almohad in power.

4.2 Was There a Medieval State? Did the Almohad Create One?

A state, as described by modern historians, is a polity that provides institutions that ensure order and aid citizens in a sovereign territory to live their everyday lives. These institutions levy taxes to provide justice, internal and external protection, and employ state resources to redistribute wealth to their supporters. This of course, is an academic description and Strayer and Anderson remind us that a state "exists chiefly in

the hearts and minds of its people; if they do not believe it is there, no logical exercise will bring it to life."[173] The Almohad understood that belief in their leadership would preserve their success and they went to great lengths to create and sustain confidence in their rule.

Joseph Strayer, in his *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State,* believes that the ultimate test for state building was whether a dynasty could "shift loyalty from family, local community, or religious organization to the state, and the acquisition of a moral authority to back up its institutional structure and its theoretical legal supremacy."[174]At its highest form, a state builds impersonal institutions that once created can survive a change of power. Ibn Khaldun does describe a concept of *asibiya*, or group feeling, that could transcend one tribe; however, the idea of an impersonal institution would have been foreign in this period, as personal-relationship politics prevailed, and much of what could be considered the "executive branch" of government remained in constant movement throughout the kingdom.

Before the Almohad, the Almoravid did attempt to create *asibiya*, a group feeling, and a community that superseded the local clan. They had assembled the Sanhaja tribes and through the power of this aggregation had conquered the Maghreb and al-Andalus. The Almoravid relied on the Andalusian Maliki religious school of Islam, coupled with the control of the sub-Saharan trade network, to further their legitimacy. They exploited the excess wealth created by this network to expand their control in the Maghreb and

173 Joseph R. Strayer*, On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 5. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 6; and also E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
174 Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, 9.

invade al-Andalus. They organized the first proto-state in the Maghreb that included a tax regime and philosophy, a judicial framework, and a provisional army that conquered the Maghreb and al-Andalus, and subdued all internal enemies. This represented a clear structural and dynastic roadmap for the Almohad to follow.

The Almohad attempted to construct a state but ultimately failed for three reasons. First, despite the infrastructure they had established, they proved unable to overcome their subjects' deep tribal culture, in particular when their organization was stress-tested by their northern foes. This was exacerbated by the fact that the Almohad not only attempted to aggregate the tribes of the Masmuda, but they further complicated their task by adding two other tribal elements, the Zenata and the Arabs. Second, their northern competitors for geographic, human, and economic resources had matured and materially changed their strategies from one hundred years earlier. And third, and most important, their economic resources, stretched across five geographies and under threat,[175] proved unable to hold an empire intact.

Ultimately, their supporters' belief in the caliphate, an important pillar in a stable state as stressed by Strayer, evaporated with losses in the field under weak leadership and an economy which began to falter. With this as background, this paper will review how the Almohad came to power, what institutions they built, and analyze why, with seemingly many of the proper elements for a stable state in place and at the height of their power, they would decline at such a precipitous rate.

175 Central Maghreb; Southern Maghreb, Ifriqiya, the Balearics, and al-Andalus.

4.3 Religion and Culture

The Almohad created an intercalated religious, political, social, and military campaign that produced a like-minded community, and eventually an empire. The Almohad succeeded in bringing these elements to bear against the populations of the Maghreb and al-Andalus, and at the height of their power they controlled the Maghreb, Ifriqiya, and al-Andalus. They also defeated and coopted the Hilalie and Salaym Arab tribes and eliminated their two strongest regional competitors, Ibn Mardanis in the Levant of Iberia (1172) and the Ibn Ghaniya (1203) in the Balearics.

4.3.1 Develop a Philosophy; Almohad *Tawhid*

No monolithic Islamic religion existed at the time of the rise of the Almohad, and many currents of religious dissent were stirring throughout the Mashriq, Ifriqiya, and the Maghreb. The Almoravid had coopted one of the four Sunna schools of Islam, Malikism, from al-Andalus as a source of their own religious legitimacy. The Fatimids and their Shiite followers, on the other hand, had been in the Maghreb since 893, and by 909 they, and their Kutama-tribe followers, had replaced the Aghlabids as the leaders of Ifriqiya.[176] Whereas they would eventually move their capital to al Fustat (969), their influence had not evaporated by the time of the arrival of the Almohad. Finally, the Kharijites, whose existence predated the Sunna-Shia split, were also present in the Maghreb, and held particular appeal for the Berbers, as one of their basic tenets ensured that the caliph need not be a descendant of the Quaraysh tribe; this allowed Berbers the opportunity to

176 Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 60-61.

participate as leaders of their own religion.[177] Ibn Tumart created a syncretic mix of Sunna, Shiite, and Kharijite practices that fit a strict version of his own beliefs, and that could effectively be contrasted with the Almoravid Maliki school.

Whereas there was a mixture of religious practices that Ibn Tumart drew from, no influence proved stronger on the philosophy of the Almohad than al-Ghazali.[178] Al-Ghazali emerged from the Sunna school of Islam and his most influential teaching was the concept of *tawhid*. *Tawhid* described God as "in all eternity, the only one to possess uniqueness, domination and divinity."[179] God was not created and he had no human characteristics. The latter element proved to be the theological wedge that Ibn Tumart utilized to attack the Almoravid; he referred to his attack as anti-anthropomorphism. His argument stated that by anthropomorphizing God the Almoravid transformed him into a corporeal being, and hence an idol.[180] The Almoravid theology interpreted aspects of the Quran that mentioned God exercising human-like behavior, such as "descending and

177 Ibid., 26-27. See also Sánchez, "Ethnic Disaffection and Dynastic Legitimacy in the early Almohad Period: Ibn Tumart's Translatio Studii et Imperii," 177. Sánchez emphasizes that the Kharijites, before the Almohad, used Quranic verses to demonstrate that the caliphate did not have to directly descend from the Quraysh (Mohammad's tribe), a doctrine inherently biased against the Berbers.

178 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 124, 125-126. Al-Hulal has Ibn Tumart studying under Abu "Abd Allah al-Hadrami, Abu al-Walid Al-Turtusi, and Al-Ghazali. The latter meeting has been called into question by various historians, but it is agreed by all that al-Ghazali's work definitely influenced Ibn Tumart. The oft-told story is that when al-Ghazali learned of the burning of his book in Cordoba he called for the destruction of their kingdom, in what appears to be a somewhat figurative fashion, and Ibn Tumart exclaimed, "Oh, Imam, ask God to put this [mission] in my hands." He was ignored at the first request but, in a second meeting, with a similar exclamation he was granted this mission, "God willing." This is most likely apocryphal, but it was part of the legend of Ibn Tumart. See also Vincent J. Cornell, "Understanding the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tumart," *Studia Islamica* no. 66 (1987): 75. For further discussion on Al-Ghazali's influence on Ibn Tumart and whether they actually met see Madeleine Fletcher, "Ibn Tumart's Teachers: the Relationship with Al-Ghazali," *Al-Qantara* 18, no. 2 (1997): 305-330.

179 Madeleine Fletcher, "The Almohad Tawhid: Theology Which Relies on Logic," *Numen* 38, no. 1 (1991): 118. See also Amira Bennison, "Almohad Tawhid and its Implications for Religious Difference," 201.

180 Fletcher, "The Almohad Tawhid," 120. See also Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 28.

sitting on the throne," as literal actions taken by God. "Ibn Tumart was not making a technical point, but emphasizing the fundamental basis of humanity's relationship with God. God was not at a place, in a location, or part of something; God 'existed before places and locations'."[181]

Ibn Tumart's reaction demonstrated a backlash against the *alfaquis* of the Maliki school of al-Andalus. In his view, they had devolved into lawyers and jurists with more interest in adjudicating parochial secular matters as opposed to his emphasis on understanding and interpreting the original hadith or the Quran and the mystic truths and vivification preached by al-Ghazali.[182] It is true that the Maliki school of al-Andalus, integrated into the framework for governing, had developed a form of statutory practice that could be argued was sectarian, more like legal code, and divorced from the original sources of the Quran and the hadith.[183] Ibn Tumart was interested in understanding and belief, not legal precedent.

Cornell makes the compelling case that Ibn Tumart was a "systematizer not a philosopher," and that he merely attempted to communicate the clearest path to the truth. He wanted only knowledge ('*ilm*) to lead his followers to truth; knowing that ignorance (*jahl*), doubt (*shakk*), and opinion (*zann*), provided the quickest paths to error.[184] Tumart's theory was not necessarily radical in its thinking. The Almohad felt comfortable with the idea that logic could bring their believers to the correct understanding of God.

181 Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire,* 160.
182 Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 17-18.
183 Cornell, "Understanding the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tumart," 82.
184 Ibid., 93. See also Amira Bennison, "Almohad Tawhid and its Implications for Religious Difference," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2010): 202.

Fletcher underscores that Tumart believed that one could reach the correct conclusion regarding the oneness of God through reason, thus legitimizing the study of science and philosophy.[185] The Almohad sponsored some of the leading thinkers of the period and created an environment for the creation of Averroes' *Ibn Yaqzan* and Moises Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*; the latter was recognized as a of the great thinkers of medieval times and one of the guides to Aquinas when he navigated Aristotelian and Christian thought.[186]

Ibn Tumart asked his followers to "enjoin good and forbid evil." As banal as this mantra appears, it had a history of use in Islam as a justification for opposing tyranny.

> Let there arise out of you a band
> Of people inviting to all that is good,
> ***Enjoining what is right,***
> ***And forbidding what is wrong.***
> They are the ones to attain felicity.
>
> Be not like those who are divided
> Amongst themselves
> And fall into disputations
> After receiving clear signs.
> For them is a dreadful penalty.[187]

There remains no doubt that Ibn Tumart should be considered a true believer and charismatic preacher, and by creating a new religion he augmented a unique sense of *asibiya* among his burgeoning followers. Numerous first-hand accounts exists of him accosting worshippers in the street or political leaders for demonstrations of what he

185 Fletcher, "The Almohad Tawhid: Theology Which Relies on Logic," 122.
186 Isaac Franck, "Maimonides and Aquinas on Man's Knowledge of God: A Twentieth Century Perspective," *The Review of Metaphysics* 38, no. 3 (1985): 592.
187 The Holy Qur'an, Abdallah Yusuf Ali Trans., III, 104-105. Cornell, "Understanding the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tumart," 89. My emphasis.

deemed to be irreligious acts.[188] The most famous and daring of these occurred when he challenged the Almoravid caliph Ali Ibn Yusuf (r.1084-1143) in Marrakech during Friday prayers. The story relates how Ibn Tumart entered the mosque for Friday prayers and knelt in the place typically reserved for the caliph. "The guardians of the mosque interrupted his prayers, saying: 'This place is reserved for the prince of the Muslims.' Ibn Tumart replied, 'Places of worship [mosques] are for God [alone].'"[189] When the caliph appeared, he spoke to Ibn Tumart, who ignored him until he, Tumart, had finished his prayers.[190] A second account of similar renown, records when Ibn Tumart was summoned to the court of Ali Ibn Yusuf. The Almoravid men were famous for wearing veils to cover their faces; an obscure rationale for this existed, but nothing in the Quran supported this practice. Upon being presented to the amir Ibn Tumart replied, "Where is the Amir? I see [only] slave-girls!" With this Ali Ibn Yusuf lifted the veil from his face and acknowledged Ibn Tumart's remark. Not feeling like he had quite insulted the caliph enough, Ibn Tumart tartly added, "The Caliphate belongs to God, not to you 'Ali Ibn Yusuf."[191]

Acts such as these not only challenged the Almoravid authority but further cemented Ibn Tumart's legitimacy as a leader among his followers. The Almohad philosophy actively rejected the Maliki school from al-Andalus adhered to by the

188 Cornell, "Understanding the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tumart," 83.
189 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 118. See also Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire,* 8.
190 Ibid.
191 Cornell, "Understanding the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tumart," 83.

Almoravid, and constructed a new practice based on parallels to the early years of Mohammed to establish their legitimacy.[192]

4.3.2 Create a Mythology

"Islam began as something strange and will revert to being strange as it began, so give glad tidings to strangers." [193]

The hadith above was quoted by Ibn Tumart to emphasize two parallels that existed between the original founding of Islam under Mohammed and the Almohad movement. The first parallel stemmed from the Almohad's move from Aghmat to Tinmal to avoid persecution by the Almoravid. The hadith refers to the period when Mohammed and his scant number of followers escaped and made their first pilgrimage from Mecca to Medina. Tinmal was the Almohad Mecca; their pilgrimage to this impregnable fortress in the Atlas Mountains helped them avoid Almoravid attacks.[194] The second reason for quoting this hadith regarded the relationship to the word "strange" in Arabic (غريب، المغرب). In Arabic "strange" can mean "different" and "being far from home." It is also derived from the same root as the name for the Maghreb. The implication inferred from this by Tumart confirmed that not only were the Almohad strange, in that there were only a few in number, but that it also implied that Muhammed himself had foretold that the Maghreb would produce a new *mahdi*. Ibn Tumart also quoted hadiths that mentioned

192 Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire*, 80.
193 This is a hadith from Sahih Muslim, no. 45. See also Ignacio Sánchez, "Ethnic Disaffection and Dynastic Legitimacy in the Early Almohad Period: Ibn Tumart's Translatio Studii et Imperii," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2010): 186.
194 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 135. This is included in Huici Miranda's notes, and he quotes al-Idrisi that to be able to be defended by four men only.

that the Berbers were superior to the Arabs and that "God would open a gate" to restore Islam in the Maghreb.[195]

Ibn Tumart was "proclaimed" *mahdi* during Ramadan of 1121, after he had given a moving sermon at Sus al-Aqsa.[196]

> Glory to God, who does what he wants and realizes what he desires; there is none to resist his mandate nor oppose his judgment. The prayer of God over our Prophet Muhammad, sent by God, he that announced that an Imama al-Mahdi, he that will fill the land with equity and justice, as it is now full of injustice and oppression, he will be sent by God to erase the falseness with the truth and to substitute it with equity and justice; to the Maghreb the extremity of his land and the end of the *time of times* and the *name is the name* and the *genealogy the genealogy* and the *deed the deed*.[197]

After this sermon, ten followers jumped to their feet and proclaimed Ibn Tumart the messenger from God who fit this description, that Ibn Tumart was the *mahdi*. These followers would be called "The Companions," and in a post-event, constructed encomium, this story enhanced the image of the Almohad and Ibn Tumart.[198] This was a period when public sermons, *khutba*, in particular those preached on Friday, remained powerful tools for communication, not only for religious messages, but political missives as well. Jones argues that Ibn Tumart's scant mention of the Prophet Muhammad in his *khutba* was reminiscent of the Fatimids, who emphasized the role of 'Ali at the expense of Muhammad. Tumart, on the other hand, spent time in his oratory establishing himself as the *mahdi*.[199]

195 Sánchez, "Ethnic Disaffection and Dynastic Legitimacy in the early Almohad Period: Ibn Tumart's Translatio Studii et Imperii," 182.
196 Ibid., 127.
197 Ibid., 128. My italics.
198 Jones, "The Preaching of the Almohads: Loyalty and Resistance across the Strait of Gibraltar," 71-101.
199 Ibid., 83-84.

Four elements of the sermon repeat themselves to communicate a specific message: *end of the time of times, and the name is the name, and the genealogy the genealogy, and the deed the deed.* The *time of times* emphasizes that Tumart had been sent at this specific moment to be *mahdi*; the *name is the name* underscores that Ibn "Muhammad" Tumart shared the same name with Muhammad the Prophet; the *genealogy of genealogy* supports Tumart's claim of Sharifian (from Mohammad's tribe) descent; and the *deed the deed* was in reference to *mahdism* as a completion of Muhammad's mission.[200]

As part of the myth building by the Almohad and the many hagiographic calques they drew with Muhammad, they went to great lengths to establish their Sharifian credibility. Huici Miranda underscores that "their genealogies were falsified" and that the Almohad spared no effort to make this connection.[201] Sanchez further explains that the twelfth-century *Kitab al-Ansab's* (*Book of Ancestry* of the Almohad)[202] author, assumed to be Ibn 'Abd al-Halim and attached to the Almohad court, wrote extensively to demonstrate that the Berbers embraced Islam before the Arab invasion, not because of it.[203] "As the twelfth-century *Kitab al-Ansab* demonstrated, the use of names to identify a simultaneous Berber and Arab ancestry enjoyed widespread diffusion among the

200 Ibid., 84-85. For an in-depth explanation of the Almohad preaching methods, see Cornell, "Understanding the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tumart," 71-103. This establishes the Sharifian connection of Ibn Tumart.

201 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 169. "Sus genealogías, pues son varias, han sido todas falsificadas, gracias al deseo de hacer del califa un árabe puro y de emparentarlo con el Profeta. Ibn Jaldun desmiente categóricamente el pretendido origen árabe, tanto de 'Abd al-Mu'min como Ibn Tumart, y afirma que eran, sin duda alguna, de origen bereber.

202 Évariste Levi-Provençal, *Documents inédits d'histoire Almohade* (Paris : P. Geuthner,1928).

203 Sánchez, "Ethnic disaffection and dynastic legitimacy in the early Almohad Period: Ibn Tumart's Translatio Studii et Imperii," 185.

Almohad tribes."[204] Both Ibn Tumart and Abd al-Mu'min strived to prove the link between their lineage and descent from the prophet. Abd al-Mu'min's lineage, established through an agnatic connection, legitimized him to both Berber and Arab audiences.[205] Fierro specifies that Abd al-Mu'min traced his family back to the prophet cognatically, on the female side to the Irdris, and the male line through al-'Abbas, the uncle of the prophet.[206] Fierro notes that Abd al-Mu'min's male uncle descended from Fatima, the prophet's daughter, so, strictly speaking, not agnatically, as required by Islamic law. These lineages endured as critical elements of Almohad propaganda and were assuredly written after the death of Ibn Tumart to ensure Abd al-Mu'min's claim to the caliphate. Al-Mu'min had usurped the caliphal power from the brothers of Ibn Tumart and remained sensitive to creating his own legacy.

Abd al-Mu'min also established his familial links to the Beni Hilal, the Arab tribes that invaded the Maghreb in the eleventh century. After the Almohad had defeated them, the Beni Hilal were coopted into the Almohad army by al-Mu'min, who would enlist their support to invade and conquer al-Andalus and to maintain his balance of power in the Maghreb.[207] This myth making by the Almohad furnished one of the propaganda tools to establish their legitimacy amongst their followers in the Maghreb and beyond. They communicated these myths in the language that the people understood: Berber (Tamazight).

204 Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire*, 24.
205 Sánchez, "Ethnic Disaffection and Dynastic Legitimacy in the early Almohad Period: Ibn Tumart's Translatio Studii et Imperii," 188.
206 Maribel Fierro, "Las genealogías de 'Abd Al-Mu'min, primer califa Almohade," *Al-Qantara* 24, no. 1 (2003): 85.
207 Ibid.,106.

4.3.4 Develop a Common Language

The Almohad, to engender a sense of belonging to their movement, leveraged their common language, Berber (Amazigh, people; Tamazight, language). Berber not Arabic, had been used by the Almoravid's Ibn Tashfin when he began to teach, or reteach, Islam to the Sanhaja. This had religio-political implications as in some respects this usage went against the founding of Islam, where at least initially, being Arab and speaking Arabic went hand in hand with being Muslim.[208] Ibn Tumart was eloquent in both Arabic and Tamazight and would continue the Almoravid practice of using the Berber language to attracted followers through his preaching ability.[209] He created a curriculum in the Berber language composed of one book in seven parts; one part to be read each day and required reading for his followers.[210] Two other books he authored were added to this library; one was named "The Dogmas," and the other "The Imamate."[211] This curriculum reified the daily practice of Islam for the followers of Tumart; it established a form of education and indoctrination, and through this praxis he created a group feeling and cohesion.[212]

Hobsbawm initially downplayed the usefulness of thinking of language as a tool for nation building as "fuzzy, shifting and ambiguous… and useful for the purposes of the traveler's orientation as cloud-shapes are compared to landmarks."[213] However, later he recognizes that the use of languages "becomes [a] more conscious exercise in social

208 Sánchez, "Ethnic Disaffection and Dynastic Legitimacy in the early Almohad Period: Ibn Tumart's Translatio Studii et Imperii,"176.
209 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya, crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 132.
210 Ibid., 131.
211 Ibid.
212 Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 68.
213 Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 6.

engineering in proportion as their symbolic significance prevails over their actual use."[214] Anderson also recognized the importance of language, in that even if its usage was established haphazardly, it could communicate a position of power.[215] In the case of Ibn Tumart, he used language to communicate his power to his Berber followers and to endow a new sense of belonging and legitimacy that transcended the Arabic language.

One cannot overstate the idea that the Berbers, as regards Islam, were viewed nearly as second-class citizens, forced to learn Arabic in order to practice their religion; many Muslim jurists believed a that the Friday sermon was required to be performed in Arabic, and Arabic alone.[216] The Almohad changed this emphasis and mandated that preachers speak the Berber language.[217] We know that the first two Almohad caliphs spoke Berber and the sources make a point of saying that the third, Abu Yusuf Ya'qub al-Mansur (r. 1184-1199), was raised in Seville and spoke Arabic well, implying that his native tongue was still Berber. Even the sixth caliph, Abu Muhammad al-Wahid (r 1224), was found to address a crowd in Seville first in Berber and then in Arabic.[218] The Berber language was thus another unifying tool that the Almohad incorporated into their daily practices to engender a sense of belonging to their followers.

214 Ibid., 112.
215 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 42.
216 Jones, "The Preaching of the Almohads: Loyalty and Resistance Across the Strait of Gibraltar," 76.
217 Ibid., 77.
218 Rachid El Hour, "Some Reflections about the Use of the Berber Language in the Medieval and Early Modern Maghrib: Data from Hagiographic Sources," *Al-Masaq, Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 26, no. 3 (2014): 296. My translation.

4.3.5 Symbolism of the State

Cultural-religious elements played an important role in the founding of the empire. Ibn Tumart's charisma and belief in his message attracted followers and provided them a standard bearer around whom they could rally and coalesce. But beyond this philosophy, what allowed the Almohad to endure and increase their empire was the ability to translate their message into actionable aspects of rule such as minting coins, building monuments, and constructing an infrastructure that communicated the lasting strength and inevitableness of their reign.

A dramatic quotidian development was the conversion to square metal currency from the round *Marabitun* Almoravid coinage. Specifically, the Almohad changed the silver dirham to a square and maintained the round shape for the gold dirhams, while inserting a square design feature in the middle.[219]

[219] Salvador Fontela Ballesta, "Numismática y propaganda Almohade, "*Al-Qantara* 18, no. 2 (1997): 447.

Figure 4. Almoravid Coins



Ali ibn Yussuf, 1107-1142,
dinar, 3.97 g., 26mm. Seville mint



Ali ibn Yusuf, 1107-1142,
Spanish quirate 8 g., 11mm, unnamed mint

Figure 3. Almohad Coins



Abu Muhammad ‘Abd Allah, 1224-1227,
dinar, 4.6 g., 29mm, unnamed mint





Abd al-Mu’min, 1146-1180,
half dirham, 0.8 g., 11mm, Fez Mint

Initially, they minted gold coins nearly half the weight of the Almoravid’s dirhams (2.3 g. vs. 4.6 g.); it has been conjectured that this evolved because they had yet to gain control of the major gold routes of the South between Ghana, Sijilmasa, and Marrakech, where the Almoravid had the strongest presence. The caliph Abu Ya’qub Yusuf (1163-1184), however, remedied this distinction when he doubled the weight to 4.66 grams in 1185, when he realized that the currency was being devalued.[220] The Almohad also deleted all the caliphal dates from the coins,[221] possibly to signify that their rule would be eternal

220 Ibid. Hence the Spanish word “doubloon,” meaning doubled.
221 Ibid., 467.

with no fixed date to its beginning or end. Their coins always incorporated a religious saying, and in the interest of building legitimacy, they included a genealogy tracing their decent back to Abd al-Mu'min and the *mahdi*, Ibn Tumart.[222] Another Almohad departure was the more common use of *naskh* (cursive) script. The development of *Naskh* only occurred in the tenth century, so its usage may have signified a departure from the earlier established practice of the Maliki-influenced Almoravid, who mostly employed the *kufi* (angular) script.[223]

It has already been documented that the Almohad demonstrated a change in religious philosophy, and this was dramatically symbolized by the cleansing of the Almoravid mosques before entering to pray in them.[224] This symbolically reinforced the impurity of the Almoravid practices, and additionally, some evidence suggests that the Almohad reoriented the *minbars* to ensure that they more accurately faced Mecca. They produced the most astrolabes of any kingdom in medieval Maghreb or Iberia, and these instruments were used in navigation and for aligning *minbars* as well.[225]

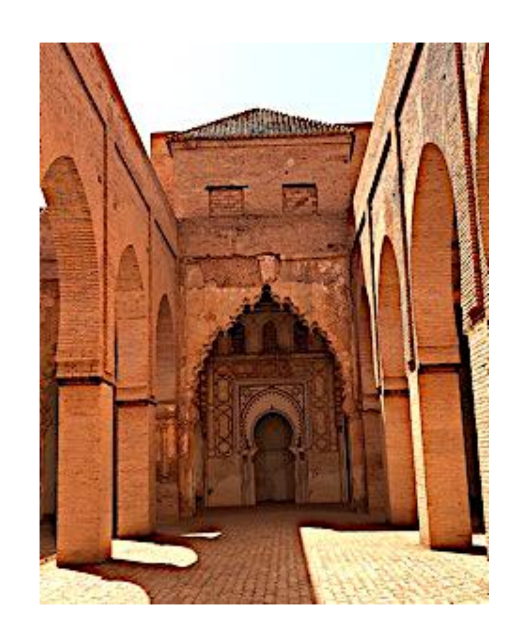
Perhaps the most dramatic change, in terms of communicating legitimacy, was represented in Almohad architecture. Ibn Tumart became famous for building mosques and schools in the villages, and the mosque in Tinmal provided a dramatic example of this, with its majestic setting and the striking simplicity of design.[226] Their first mosque,

[222] Ibid., 450.
[223] Both scripts were used by the Almohad.
[224] Maribel Fierro, "Conversion, Ancestry and Universal Religion: The Case of the Almohads in the Islamic West (twelfth-thirteenth centuries)," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2010): 163.
[225] Azucena Hernández Pérez and Hernández Azucena: *Astrolabios en al-Andalus y los reinos medievales Hispanos* (Madrid: Ediciones de La Ergastula, 2018), 113-115. The author documents that the Almohad had one of the largest productions of astrolabes in the medieval period, and in fact did use them to locate the direction of Mecca.
[226] Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire*, 54.

constructed in Tinmal, although small in scale, could not be surpassed in elegance with its hypnotic, linear structure. Built in 1148 and settled in the High Atlas Mountains, it emerged as the Almohad's impregnable redoubt. Ignacio Gonzalez Cavero specifies its similarities to the great Umayyad mosque in Cordoba and believes that it is similar to the works of the Andalusian engineer, Malaga al-Hayyay I'yis, who also worked on the *maqsura* of the Kutubiyya mosque in Marrakesh (constructed 1184-1199).[227]

Figure 4. Tinmal Mosque: Horseshoe Arches and Interior Architecture [228]



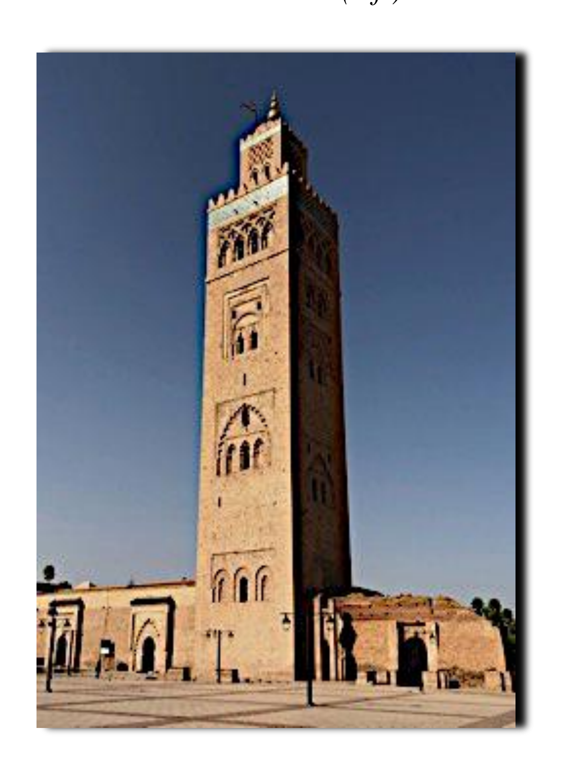


The second caliph, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, had been raised in Seville, and upon his triumphant return as caliph, made the city of his youth the Almohad capital in Spain and constructed its impressive mosque (1172-1176) in recognition of its preeminence.[229] This work contained seventeen naves, horseshoe arches, and a passageway connected to the

227 Ignacio Cavero González, "The Almohad Caliphate: A Look at Al-Andalus Through Arabic Documentation and Their Artistic Manifestations," *Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute* (Aug. 2018): 6.
228 The first Almohad mosque in Tinmal. Photo by author.
229 Christian Evert, "The Architectural Heritage of Islamic Spain in North Africa," in *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain,* ed. by Jerrilyn D. Dodds (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 77.

palace, reminiscent of the Great Mosque of Cordoba. The Giralda, or minaret, was constructed of aloe and red and yellow sandalwood with gold and silver covering,[230] and was identical to the Kutubiyya in Marrakech.

Figure 5. The Minaret Tower of the Kutubiyya Mosque in Marrakech (left) and Seville Giralda Tower (right) [231]





The Almohad established more subtle changes as well. All buildings were commemorated with quotations from the Quran and not the name of the ruler; this represented a departure from the Almoravid and the Umayyad before them, and reinforced the strong religiosity of their message.[232] Martinez argues that this epigraphic change demonstrates a separation from Maghrebi and Andalusian practices and displays

230 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerín*, 172.
231 The Minaret tower from the Kutubiyya mosque in Marrakech. Photo of Kutubiyya mosque by author.
232 M. Martínez-Nuñoz, "El califato Almohade. pensamiento religiosos y legitimación del poder a través de los textos epigráficos," (*Ultra Mare: Mélanges de la langue Arabe et d'Islamologie offerts a Aubert Martin* ed. Fréderic Bauden (Louvain-Paris-Dudley (MA): Association Pour la Promotion de l'Histoire et de l'Archéologie Orientales, 2004), 196-197.

the meticulous attention to the details of the entire communicative process.[233] He viewed this artistic-political expression as a manifestation of the changes that occurred across the Islamic world in the twelfth century, and believes that the Almohad wanted to communicate a separation from the past and convey the mysticism embodied of the teachings of al-Ghazali.[234] They also introduced cursive writing and ataurique design in the decorations of their mosques.[235] The Almohad Masmuda came from the mountains where there was more vegetation than the desert plains occupied by the Almoravid Sanhaja, and perhaps this explains their comfort with these verdant designs.

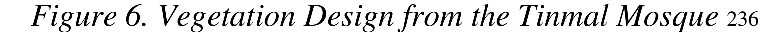


Figure 6. Vegetation Design from the Tinmal Mosque [236]



The symbolism of the Almohad communicated the changes in philosophy and ruling structure, but most importantly their strength and the inevitability of their rule.

233 Ibid., 203.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid., 197. See also Rosseló Bordoy Guillermo, "The Ceramics of al-Andalus," in *Al-Andalus: The art of Islamic Spain,* ed. Dodds, 97-104.
236 Vegetation design from the mosque at Tinmal. Photo by author.

4.4 Administrative Bureaucracy

4.4.1 Communication Network

4.4.1.1 Physical Presence

The itinerant nature of the caliphate provided one of the methods that communicated to the governing elites and local populace that they were connected with the kingdom, and that the rule had vitality. This displayed an organized, ritualistic process that was purposeful and studied.[237] One could argue that the Almohad had four different capitals—Tinmal, Marrakesh, Ribat, and Seville—and to reinforce their presence the Almohad constructed buildings and put administrations in place, even when the caliphate was not in court. The effective kings of this dynasty displayed a peripatetic leadership and participated in virtually all decisive battles. The confrontations listed below are examples of state-sponsored campaigns that were the major turning points in the history of the Almohad.[238]

Table 1. Almohad Leaders and Battle Attendance

Almohad Leader	**Battle**
Ibn Tumart	Al Buhayra (1130)
Abd al-Mu'min	The Fall of Marrakech (1147) The Battle of Seti (1153) Battle of Alarcos (1195)
Abu Ya'qub Yusuf	Santarém (1184) (where he died)
Abu Yusuf Ya'qub al-Nasir	Las Navas de Tolosa (1212)

237 Maribel Fierro, "Algunas reflexiones sobre el poder itinerante Almohade," *E-Spania* 8 (2009): 2.
238 Other battles such as Oran, Ifiriqiya, and numerous sieges in al-Andalus that are not listed here.

The work of Buresi and El Aallaoui tracks the government on the move through the analysis of administrative documents sent from the region of the kingdom in which the Almohad caliphs found themselves, with their "curial, administrative, financial, fiscal, and military services" in attendance.[239] The caliphs made these journeys to evaluate the status of their realms, hear the complaints from their subjects, and to conquer new territory, but also to communicate their regal power through the use of symbolism. Ibn Sahib's documentation of Abd al-Mu'min's first campaign to al-Andalus serves as a resplendent example.

Abd al-Mu'min began his campaign to al-Andalus from Rabat preceded by the Quran of Ibn Tumart and the Quran of the Prophet 'Uthman, which the Almohad had obtained from the Umayyads. The Quran of 'Uthman was protected by a red box enshrined with in pearls, rubies and emeralds.[240] The Qurans served to legitimize the Almohad, and in particular Abd al-Mu'min, in two ways. First, it associated his rule to that of the founding *mahdi*, Ibn Tumart; and second, it connected the Almohad empire to the glorious dynasty of the Umayyads of Spain. Mounted on his brilliant steed the caliph was proceeded by flags of vivid yellow, red, and white, and four small candles and spears, each of which had a golden apple settled on its point. Behind him would follow his direct family members with sixteen large banners and large oval shields of pure silver that reached to the ground.[241] After the family would come the Almohad and Arab tribes,

239 Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 55.
240 Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, 178. See also Ignacio Cavero González, "The Almohad Caliphate, 12. See also Evert, "The Architectural Heritage of Islamic Spain in North Africa."
241 Ibid., 171. See also *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastias Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 182-184.

filling the entire landscape with pomp and power.[242] Upon arriving at a location from these journeys, prayers were offered in a single gathering, and this too served to reaffirm the legitimacy of the Almohad as leaders of the faithful.

4.4.1.2 Communication of the *Khutbah*

During the caliphate of Abd al-Mu'min he distributed detailed circular letters intended to be read from the *khutbah* on Friday. Every victory was disseminated to each region in order to, as Buresi and El Aallaoui conjecture, "promote pre-national sentiment…and cohesion through the empire."[243] These circular missives and sermons from the *khutbah* advertised victories and reinforced the sense of power, omnipresence, and inevitableness of their reign. A telling example of this occurred early in the dynasty, when Abd al-Mu'min and the Almohad conquered al-Mahdiya in 1160. The court scribe, Ibn Sahib, conveys how "they read the announcement from the pulpits… and spread the happy news to all his subjects and tribes, and the riders flew with the news to all the regions of the lands and damaged the ears of all the infidels, thanks be to God." [244] After another victory by the Almohad over Ibn Mardanis, Sahib relates that it took less than sixteen days from Murcia to Marrakech (the fastest possible according to his account) to communicate this news.[245]

242 Ibid., 180.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, 16. "Se leyeron la carta y los versos llegados y se recitaron, y se subió con ellos a lo alto de los almimbares, y por ellos conoció el hombre de la ciudad y el del campo todas estas buenas nuevas, y se divulgaron estas alegrías entre los súbditos y las tribus, y volaron los jinetes, con estas alegrías dulces y alegres, en sus carreras hacia todas las regiones pobladas; y estas noticias verdaderas y las nuevas, ellas unidas, hirieron los oídos de todos los infieles, gracias a dios." My translation.
245 Ibid., 79.

The use of the Friday pulpit did not represent a new practice to the Maghreb or al-Andalus, but the Almohad proved especially disciplined in exercising this tool to communicate to the faithful. The event of the completion of the great mosque in Seville provides an example. Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (r. 1163-1184) mandated that his son, Abu Ishaq, require that all male citizens attend Friday services at the new mosque to hear the sermon on April 24, 1182. This communication reinforced the presence of the Almohad and demonstrated their regal power in one of the most impressive architectural constructions in their realm.[246]

4.4.2 Jurists and the Law

The administrative backbone of the Almohad was not created *ex nihilo*; they relied heavily on the secretarial apparatus established by the Almoravid before them.[247] Bureaucrats from al-Andalus were employed to aid building the state:

> The Almoravid [and Almohad] administration relied heavily on the recruitment of Andalusi officials, who were instrumental to the incorporation of the western Maghreb into a more homogeneous tax system predicated on Maliki norms rather than on the decisions of individual chiefs. Financial affairs seem to have been in the hands of an official called a *mushrif* (overseer) who was often of civilian Andalusi background.[248]

Although their bureaucratic structure never rose to the level of the Umayyads in al-Andalus, the Almoravid and Almohad added more legal infrastructure and the number of Maghreb jurists grew from six to fifteen in the eleventh to twelfth century (Table 2, F. Maghreb column).

246 Ibid., 199.
247 Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 170.
248 Ibid., 212.

Table 1. Jurists Recorded in Qadi 'Iyadi's Biographical Dictionary (cont.)[249]

Cen.	Medina	Mecca	Yemen	Iraq	Syria	Egypt	Ifriqiya	Andalus	F. Maghrib
V	1			2		41	27	71	
VI	2			5		21	79	118	
VII	1			22		26	51	174	3
VIII	1	1	3	13	1	15	59	108	2
IX		2		23		13	21	82	5
X		2		25	2	9	11	56	6
XI				8		2	29	64	6
XII				5	3	3	24	21	15
XIII	3					3	20	43	
Total	64	7	3	114	14	194	356	779	37

One example of the improved governing structure of the Almohad can be seen in their legal *fatwas,* which provide insight into the importance of gold, the development of the economy, and the increased trade with al-Andalus.[250] It is clear from Gomez-Rivas's study of *fatwas* that gold, commerce, and irrigation were monitored and regulated by the Almohad governing system (Table 3). The number of *fatwas* concerning management of the economy exploded during the period of the Almohad dynasty. During their reign, *fatwas* concerning the economy and endowments increased from 3 to 180 and from 182 to 260, in the Far Maghreb and al-Andalus respectively (Table 3).

249 Camilo Gomez-Rivas, *Law and the Islamization of Morocco under the Almoravids* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 59-60.
250 Ibid.

Table 3. Fatwas of Identifiable Origin in al-Wansharisi's Mi'yar

	Procedural, Ritual, Family IX-XII	Procedural, Ritual, Family XII-XV	Economy, Endowments IX-XII	Economy, Endowments XII-XV
Far Maghrib	1	106	3	180
Central Maghrib	9	43	12	68
Ifriqiya	256	180	178	136
al-Andalus	160	179	182	260

An example of one *fatwa* regarding water rights and irrigation follows:

> The orchard owners are more entitled to irrigate their orchards than the owner of the mill, even if they planted (*ansha'u*) their gardens after the miller built his mill. When they are no longer in need to irrigate, the miller can channel the water to his mill. This is what I think and say concerning this question, based on its sense as it appears in the hadith of the Prophet (the peace and blessings of God be upon him) concerning the flow of Mahzur and Mudhaynab, because he judged (*qadiya*) that upstream users take water up to the ankles and then send it downstream.[251]

These rulings provide some indication of the expanding administrative system that the Almohad put in place in the Maghreb and al-Andalus.[252]

4.4.3 Attract Followers and Organize the Administration

4.4.3.1 Tribalism Revisited

The word "tribalism" is often used to characterize the dynasties of the Maghreb and one must be cognizant of the potential pejorative overtones of this word. Bennison describes tribes as having three basic elements: "first, the belief that all the members of the group are joined by kinship, whether real or fictive; secondly, a keen interest in

[251] Ibid., 187. It continues: "Therefore since [the Prophet] (the peace and blessings of God be upon him) didn't, on any account, allot the entirety of the water to upstream users excluding downstream users, so the mill owners should on no account take exclusive possession of the water for their mills, excluding the orchard owners, even if the latter were upstream and even if the [millers] built before the [garden owners]."
[252] Ibid., 40.

genealogical ancestry to determine social and political relationships; and, thirdly, reliance on a form of political organization often described by anthropologists as 'segmentarity,' a theoretically egalitarian type of organization in which several family 'segments' form one clan, several clan 'segments' form one tribe, several tribe 'segments' form a larger tribal people or confederation."[253] This segmentary definition relies on the ideas promulgated by E. E. Evans Pritchard, commented on extensively by Ernest Gellner and David Hart.[254] Gellner, in his *Saints of the Atlas*, proposed that because the state in the Maghreb did not exist, tribes relied on themselves, and would only aggregate in times of trouble, and that this cohesion was not permanent. He argued that kinship is to tribe as bureaucracy is to the modern state,[255] and that only external threats created cohesion, not internal agencies.[256] This definition of tribe could easily fit the descriptions of kingdoms both north and south of the Tagus river; what were the interrelated families of the northern Christian kingdoms of Iberia, if not tribes? The northern kingdoms could also be seen as 'joined by kinship' that operated as their 'state bureaucracy' and would only 'aggregate in times of trouble,' as described by Bennison and Gellner above. However, Gellner finds that whereas Christianity was "organized, hierarchical, and ritually rich," Islam was "minoritarian, fragmented, and discontinuous."[257] The argument of

253 Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 8.
254 E. E. Evans Pritchard, "The Nuer of the Southern Sudan," in *African Political Systems*, ed. M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 272-296. Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969); David Hart, "Segmentary Systems and the Role of the Five Fifths in Tribal Morocco," *Revue de l'Occident Musulman y de la Méditerrananeé* 3 (1967): 65-95.
255 Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas,* 12.
256 Ibid., 4.
257 Ibid., 11.

Christianity's distinction is plausibly reinforced by the support and coordination provided by the Christian church to the northern kingdoms of Iberia.

One of the elements that allowed the Almohad to create their empire was the ability to expand their base of support beyond their native tribes and clans. The three major clan groups of the period were the Sanhaja, the Masmuda, and the Zenata. These groups provided the major representatives of the Almoravid, the Almohad, and the Marinid dynasties respectively. While each of these groups had its own dialect, they all spoke a form of the Berber language that was intelligible amongst themselves. However, this separation of groups does call into question how long an aggregation of tribes, in particular those outside of a specific tribal membership, would coalesce. The example of the tribes organized by Ibn Tumart support Gellner's thesis of unity caused by outside threats, and the Masmuda and Zenata would come to challenge this unity later in the history of the empire. As will be discussed in more detail, the Zenata were initially

Table 2. The Tribes and Dynasties of Medieval Morocco

Tribe	**Dynasty**	**Geography**	**Language**
Sanhaja	Almoravid (1040-1147)	Middle Atlas (South)	Tamazight
Masmuda	Almohad (1120-1269)	Anti-Atlas (Central)	Tashilhit
Zenata	Marinid (1244-1465)	Rif (North)	Tharifits

faithful to the Almohad cause and participated in the seven-year campaign in the Maghreb and at the Battle of Alarcos in Iberia. However, having chosen a Zenata, Abd al-Mu'min, from outside of the major Masmuda tribal group, the Almohad seeded one of

the future divisions to their rule. Abd al-Mu-min attracted the Arabs and his Zenata tribesmen to the Almohad cause, but when later generations were unable to secure the same level of success as he and his two successors, the Zenata Marinids would develop into one of the main sources of the Almohad demise.

The charismatic Ibn Tumart successfully created an external threat to Islam by highlighting the anthropomorphism of the Almoravid. However, his appeal to the Masmuda tribes was also economic, for as the Almoravid moved north outside of their historical southern territory into Marrakech and beyond, they disrupted the trade routes of the Masmuda. García's theory is that the Almohad assembly became necessary because of the Almoravid blockades to their historical trade with the southern plains.[258] This further supports the argument that while ideology became an element of their success, the Almohad proved just as motivated by material gains (or losses) when they rebelled against the Almoravid.

4.4.3.2 Organization and Administration

The Almohad leadership constructed a political infrastructure that attempted to supersede tribal loyalties.[259] The clearest delineation of each group was outlined in *Kitab al Ansab (Book of Genealogy),* which detailed their group structure and the Sharifian genealogies of Ibn Tumart and Abd al-Mu'min. As previously mentioned, the initial group of ten supporters that proclaimed Ibn Tumart to be the *mahdi* were labeled "The

258 Sénén García,"The Masmuda Berbers and Ibn Tumart: An Ethnographic Interpretation of the Rise of the Almohad Movement," *Journal of African Studies* 18 (1990): 11, 17.
259 Two excellent pieces of analysis regarding this topic are Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* and Hopkins, "The Almohad Hierarchy," 93-112.

Companions" or "The Ten."[260] These men might be thought of as Tumart's cabinet. In the *Kitab al Ansab* special duties such as judge, *imam* (prayer leader), and the secretary were assigned for this group.[261]

The second set of followers, "The Fifty" (*Ahl Khamsin*), acted as a chamber of deputies. Echoing the influence of the Berber language mentioned above, this may have been an autochthonous development, as the council of fifty paralleled Berber traditions (*agrao* or *taqbilt*) that entailed elections of tribal leaders to participate in councils and adjudicate tribal disputes.[262] This original council of fifty consisted of nineteen representatives from Tinmal that were not necessarily related by clan, and as such may have originated from diverse regions.[263] The tribes represented in The Fifty in order of strength were: Hargha, Ganfisa, Haskura, Gadmiwa, Sanhaja, Hintata, and Qaba'il.[264]

260 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica arabe de las dinastias Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 128. In this passage the names of the specific ten are given; in some other sources they are not, in others only seven names are given.
261 Hopkins, "The Almohad Hierarchy," 95. The Fifty are also mentioned in Anon, *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya*, *crónica árabe de las dinastias Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 129.
262 Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire*, 124-125.
263 Hopkins, "The Almohad Hierarchy," 96.
264 Ibid. *Al Hulal* mentions similar tribes: Harga, Tinmal, Hintata, Gadmiwa, Haskura y Sinhaya, Al Hulal, 129.

Table 3. Tribal Representation within the Council of The Fifty[265]

Tribe	Before the Purge	After the Purge	Ibn Sahib al-Sala
Ahl Tinmal	19	21	14
Hargha	8	8	6
Gansfa	4	5	4
Gadmiwa	4	4	2
Haskura	4	4	3
Hintata	2	8	3
Sanhaja	3	3	3
Qaba'il	1	1	1
Total	45	54	36

Curiously, the Sanhaja and the Haskura of the Almoravid were represented, and this may indicate early defectors from the Almoravid cause, but also reinforced the universal nature of the Almohad movement that encouraged tribes outside of the Masmuda to join. One tribe conspicuously missing from the list in the *Ansab* and the *Hulal* was the that of Abd al-Mu'min, the Kumiya. The Kumiya were members of the Zenata tribe, who would later join Abd al-Mu'min on his military campaign to defeat the Almoravid and participate in the battle of Alarcos in Iberia. This council summary

265 Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 63. Buresi and Aallaoui specify the tribal groups in the table summarized above was derived from two different sources: *al-Baydaq* and Ibn Sahib al-Sala. Table taken from 'I. al-D. Musa, "Al-tanzimat al-hizbiyya," 63. "After the Purge" represents the period when some resistant members of local tribes, in particular the elders, where killed.

demonstrates that at least initially, widespread representation existed across numerous tribes within the Masmuda-Almohad structure.

The next level of governance developed by Ibn Tumart constituted "The Seventy" and the *talibis* (literally "students"), who were religious scholars. The latter group would come to be divided into two. The first would be sent to the different districts of the realm to advise leaders on religious and military issues; and the second would stay with the *mahdi* or the caliph wherever he traveled.[266] They were considered the religious and constitutional delegates of the organization and were often assigned to tribal areas not indigenous to themselves; thus, they represented the central government and not their specific tribal interests.[267] Also delineated among the remaining followers were the regular army (*jund*), the foot soldiers (*quza*), and the archers (*ruma*).[268] Each of the groups enumerated were separated and had their respective responsibilities. *Al Hulal* describes that "each class of these had their own organization, and they did not mix with the other, neither while traveling or in residence, and each stayed with themselves in their own place, and did not leave from there."[269]

This separation of classes represents the conflicting dynamic within the Almohad structure. On the one hand, the Almohad leadership attempted to integrate the tribes, as opposed to merely maintaining them in their separate enclaves. Countering this integration, was the separation of duties by groups defined above in *Al Hulal*, and the fact that Ibn Tumart placed his own people, the Hargha, in the first rank among tribes. This

266 Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 107-108.
267 Ibid., 108.
268 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya, crónica arabe de las dinastias Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 130.
269 Ibid., 131.

separation would be exacerbated by the appointment of Abd al-Mu'min as the first caliph. He was a Kumiya and this tribe was not part of the Masmuda or the original tribal group represented in Tinmal.[270] One suspects that after the establishment of the family dynasty by Abd al-Mu'min, and the appointment of many of his family members to governorships and other positions, this integrated tribal dynamic would have been altered or minimized.[271]

The harsh reality of the Almohad revolution revealed that once established in Tinmal pockets of resistance to their movement existed. In particular, the record shows that some of the older generations of sheikhs and ulema had demonstrated defiance to Ibn Tumart, and as a result they were slaughtered.[272] *Al-Baydaq*, the earliest court document of the Almohad movement, recorded a period of forty days when members from the five primary tribes were culled from the true believers (this is referred to as "The Purge" in Table 5).[273] Berber society was accustomed to a more egalitarian organizational structure and Ibn Tumart had force-fit a more hierarchical system and coopted those willing to conform to his vision.[274] One of the men who survived this purge and emerged as the leader of Tumart's campaign was Abd al-Mu'min.

270 Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period,* 91.
271 Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi*, Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 63. "El viernes, 21 de Sa'ban – 9 de Diciembre del 1183 – nombró el Amir al-Mu'minin, Abu Ya'qub, a sus cuatro hijos gobernadores de las capitales del país de Andalus; envió a Abu Ishaq a Sevilla de gobernador, como estaba antes; dio a Abu Yahya el gobierno de Córdoba a instancias de Abu-l-Walid b Rusd; a Abu Zayd al-Hardani el de Granada y a Abu 'Abd Allah el de la ciudad de Murcia. Les mandó marchar a ellas como vanguardia de su expedición completa." Later in his reign, 1183, he appointed his four sons as governors in al-Andalus; at Seville, Cordoba, Granada, and Murcia.
272 Bennison, "Almohad Tawhid and its Implications for Religious Difference," 195-216.
273 Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire*, 99.
274 Ibid., 117.

On his return from the East Ibn Tumart had recruited Abd al-Mu'min when they had met in Ifriqiya in 1117. Ibn Tumart asked Abd al-Mu'min what he was looking for and Abd al-Mu'min responded that he was travelling to the East to learn more of the science of Islam. Ibn Tumart responded, "I have something better than this...the glory of this world and the next. Accompany me and help me with my endeavor to kill the prohibited, vivificate the science [of Islam], and extinguish the heresies."[275] Abd al-Mu'min accepted Tumart's proposal and represented part of The Ten at the point of their move to Tinmal. However, al-Mu'min solidified his position after his strong showing at the disastrous battle at Buhayra (1130); his rise in the organization further improved after the death of his strongest rival, al Bashir, during this same conflict.

Although it took three years from the announcement of Tumart's death for al-Mu'min's to emerge as the leader of the Almohad, he wasted no time in recruiting many of his own clan, the Kumiya, to positions of power.[276] Abd al-Mu'min further segmented his followers into factions: those that had embraced the cause before the battle of Buhayra; the companions (*al-sabqun al-awwalun*), who were present during the seven-year war and before the fall of Oran (1145); and those who adhered to the movement after the fall of Marrakech.[277] The importance of this prioritization can be distinguished in two ways: first, these groups were marked by two battles, supporting the view that Abd

275 Abd al-Wahid Al-Marrakusi. *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista volumen iv*, 139. "Llamó a Abd al-Mu'min y, a solas con él, le preguntó por su nombre, por el de su padre y por su linaje y él se los comunicó, nombres y linaje. Le preguntó también por lo que se proponía y le refirió que se encaminaba a Oriente en busca de la ciencia. Le dijo Ibn Tumart: eco algo mejor que eso». Le contestó: «y ¿qué es ello?'. Le dijo: 'la gloria de este mundo y la del otro. Acompáñame y ayúdame en mi empresa de matar lo prohibido y vivificar la ciencia y extinguir las herejías.' Accedió Abd al-Mu'min a lo que quería y permaneció Ibn Tumart en Mallála unos meses."
276 Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 212.
277 Ibid., 212. See also Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 63.

al-Mu'min was a military-minded leader; and second, the record makes clear that the seven-year campaign, supported by the Zenata tribe, strengthened Abd al-Mu'min's support outside the dominant Masmuda.

The Almohad attracted the Masmuda, some dissenting Sanhaja, and the coastal Kumiya, and at least initially, it appears that Ibn Tumart attempted to develop a more integrated form of *asibiya* than had ever been previously accomplished in the Maghreb. Furthermore, Abd al-Mu'min would go on to integrate the Arab tribes of Ifriqiya, which will be addressed separately below in section 4.6.2. This mixture of tribes was not held together by *asibiya* alone; what sustained this unity over the course of the first four caliphs was an expanding economy and the opportunity to acquire wealth.

4.5 Economic Control

The Almohad economy built upon what the Almoravid had constructed to manage their empire. The economic triad of gold-salt-finished goods provided the impetus for the expansion of these proto-states' trade networks and political apparatuses, and in part drew them into Andalusia. The dominance of gold and the control of the caravan routes of Awdaghust-Sijilmasa-Marrakech-Ceuta, established by the Almoravid and continued by the Almohad, increased trade substantially. However, evidence also suggests that the establishment of urban trading centers, Marrakech being the premier example, led to the abandonment or destruction of smaller agricultural towns by the Almoravid and the Almohad both.[278] The archeological research conducted by Boone and Benco confirms

278 James L. Boone and Nancy L. Benco, "Islamic Settlement in North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999): 54. See also James L. Boone, Emlen Myers, and Charles L. Redman, "Archeological and Historical Approaches to Complex Societies: the Islamic States of Medieval Morocco," *American Anthropologist,* n. s. 92, no. 3 (1990): 636.

that the Almoravid-Almohad central seats of power were established to "facilitate long-distance trade between West African and Mediterranean economic spheres,"[279] and Boone and Benco document a precipitous decrease in mid-size towns during the Almoravid-Almohad period.[280] The growth of towns along the Mediterranean littoral facilitated an increase in trade with al-Andalus and the rest of the Mediterranean, and may have come at the expense of internal agricultural production. An example of the importance of agricultural to the Almohad state was the tax revenue generated by olives from Marrakech (30,000 dinars a year), Meknes (35,000), and Fez (50,000) which supported of the central government.[281] This revenue would come under attack in the early stages of the Marinid revolt, in particular Meknes and Fez, which were closer to the Zenata's strongholds.

In essence, the Almohad protected their supply chain and not their territorial-based production. This would have implications when the conflicts with the northern Christian states in Iberia, and later with the Marinids in the Maghreb, increased. Boone and Benco's work implies that as the Almohad became more commercially driven—and centralized—they also became more vulnerable to attacks from the periphery that could threaten their food supply.[282] Fez and Marrakesh, important nodes in these trade routes, were formidable, walled cities, but if a rebel group took these cities or disrupted the trade

279 Ibid., 51-71. See also Camilo Gómez-Rivas, "Las Navas de Tolosa, the Urban Transformation of the Maghrib, and the Territorial Decline of al-Andalus," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012): 27-32.
280 Ibid., 54. Two agrarian cities cited, Al-Basra and Nakur, were abandoned during this period.
281 Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire*, 169.
282 James L. Boone, Emlen Myers, and Charles L. Redman, "Archeological and Historical Approaches to Complex Societies: the Islamic States of Medieval Morocco," *American Anthropologist,* n. s. 92, no. 3 (1990): 644. See also Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire*, 200.

flow between them, they would be able to control much of the military and commercial state.

Constable, on the other hand, argues that once they had dominated al-Andalus, the Almohad, like the Almoravid before them, exploited its resources, and there is little evidence of economic decline under their regime.[283] Seville, the Almohad capital in al-Andalus, was famous across the Mediterranean for its olive oil, and one could travel for "twelve miles across and forty miles long, from Seville to Niebla, [and] it was planted with fig trees and olives."[284] As previously mentioned (Chapter 3.3, p. 39), a thriving trade in silk existed, with 3,000 silk farms in Jaen alone.[285] Jews were active in the textile trade and silk in particular, and the Geniza documents provide ample proof not only of their activity in this commerce, but of the triangle of trade between the Mashriq, Iberia, and Morocco.[286] Similar to Constable, Glick confirms the idea that Marrakech and Fez became integral hubs of the Mediterranean trade network and thrived under the Almoravid and Almohad.[287] Glick emphasizes that the Jewish and Christian "middle-class sub-group, the *fuqaha*, provided the personnel which staffed the judicial and executive offices of urban jurisdictions (e.g., judgeships and prefectures), which provided the low-level institutional continuity and gave cohesion to the society even in the face of

283 Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain*, 33.
284 Al-Himyari, *Kitab Ar-Rawd Al-Mi'tar*, trans. María Pilar Maestro González (Valencia: Gráficas Bautisa, 1963), 50."Este aceite proviene de Ajarafe, región que se extiende sobre una longitud de cuarenta millas, y esta toda ella sembrada de higueras y olivos. Esta región que empieza en Sevilla, se continua hasta Niebla, con una profundidad de doce millas. Cuenta con ocho mil aldeas prosperas, baños y hermosas casas. Entre el principio del territorio de Ajarafe y Sevilla hay tres millas. Sevilla esta situada al borde del Guadalquivir, que la baña por el Oeste." The abbreviated translation is mine.
285 Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain*, 173.
286 S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgement in One Volume*, ed. Jacob Lassner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 233.
287 Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the early Middle Ages,* 31.

political instability at its upper levels."[288] It does appear, however, that the arrival of the Almohad applied pressure on the Jewish traders to convert to Islam, although some conversions may have been less than sincere, and crypto-Jews more than likely continued to trade.

Commensurate with the arrival of the Almohad was the rise of the Italian city states. The Genoese and Pisans established themselves as dominant participants in Mediterranean commerce and their influence was felt in both the Maghreb and Spain. The Almohad took advantage of their presence and were not above doing business with the infidel from the Italian city states. Directly after taking power in Tunis in 1160, Abd al-Mu'min signed a fifteen-year treaty with the Genoese, allowing them to pay 20 percent less tax than other foreign traders in the southern ports along the Mediterranean littoral.[289] David Abulafia in his monograph, *The Two Italies*, uncovered data that demonstrates that Almohad-controlled ports represented as much as 29 percent of the total Genoese trade from 1191. However, in the critical period after Las Navas, in 1214, this fell to only 20 percent driven by Ceuta, where trade fell from 13 to 4.2 percent, implying a major dislocation during this period.[290]

[288] Ibid., 155.
[289] Hilmar C. Krueger, "Trade with Northwest Africa in the Twelfth Century," *Speculum* 8, no. 3 (1933): 379. They were required to pay only eight percent versus ten percent for other foreign merchants. See also Abulafia, "Christian Merchants in the Almohad Cities," 251-257; Constable, "Genoa and Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: notarial evidence for a shift in patterns of Trade," 635-656; and Luis de Conte Mas-Latrie, *Traités de paix et de commerce et documents dīvers concernant les relations des chrétiens avec les arabes de l'Afrique Septentrionale au moyen âge: recueillis par ordre de l'empereur et publiés avec une introduction historique* (Paris: H. Plon, 1866), 108-109.
[290] David Abulafia, *The Two Italies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 298.
182.

Table 4. Genoese Mediterranean 1191-1227 [291]

Destinations	**1191**	**12003**	**1205-16**	**1214**	**1222-27**
Ceuta	10.6%	14.0%	13.0%	4.2%	14.4%
Bougie	4.7%	12.0%	13.7%	16.1%	7.2%
Tunis	3.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%	5.5%
Spain	2.1%	3.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%
Sub Total **Almohad Ports**	**20.7%**	**29.4%**	**27.6%**	**20.4%**	**27.5**
Oltramare **(Latin Kingdoms in Levant)**	20.0%	15.5%	32.2%	29.5%	38.8%
Sicily	17.8%	15.5%	14.7%	40.9%	12.0%
Alexandria	0.0%	10.0%	7.3%	0.7%	0.3%
Sardinia	6.7%	9.0%	4.5%	2.2%	6.0%
Romania	17.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Naples	8.1%	20.0%	1.5%	0.0%	4.8%
Corsica	0.1%	7.0%	2.7%	0.2%	2.5%
France	1.4%	12.0%	2.5%	0.0%	4.7%
Maremma	0.4%	2.5%	4.0%	2.7%	1.5%
Other	7.8%	0.5%	1.2%	3.4%	0.7%

This trade agreement was most likely renewed in 1176 and a new contract was signed by 1191. These treaties established trade not only for the southern shores of the Mediterranean but al-Andalus as well, as Almeria, now under Almohad control, was listed as one of the ports where the Genoese paid tariffs in 1143.[292] The Genoese maintained this relationship with the Almohad while at the same time they signed commercial treaties with their enemies: Ibn Mardanis and the Ibn Ghaniya in the Balearic islands.[293] The Genoese records from this period indicate that commerce increased and

291Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 182.
292 Constable, "Genoa and Spain in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: Notarial Evidence for a Shift in Patterns of Trade," 640.
293 Abulafia, "Christian Merchants in the Almohad Cities," 253.

Constable infers from the Genoese accounts that the entire economy grew under the Almohad.[294]

As relates to internal trade, the Almohad paid meticulous attention to their tax revenue and Abd al-Mu'min conducted a census of his empire to understand precisely where he could garner more wealth.[295] Early in his reign Abd al Mu'min observed that:

> It is very strange that with all our power we still lack money, while the Almoravid, on the other hand, who only controlled to Tlemcen, pay their soldiers well, and we control all of Ifriqiya, and we don't have enough money to give our Almohad soldiers. This is the strangest thing in the world. [296]

Two potential reasons exist for this speech. First, this was early in the reign of the Almohad, and because their conquest in the Maghreb proceeded from north to south, they may not have controlled the strongholds of the Almoravid empire, located in the south, that constituted the main source of gold. This is further supported by their coinage that earlier in their reign consisted of half the weight of the Almoravid at 2.36 grams.[297] Numismatic evidence supports that that the Almohad produced only half as much gold as the Almoravid and even less later in their dynastic cycle.[298]

[294] Constable, "Genoa and Spain in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: Notarial Evidence for a Shift in Patterns of Trade," 641. See also Abulafia, *The Two Italies,* 113, 119, 158, 166, 182. These pages contain charts of commerce between the Genoese and Ceuta, and demonstrate that from the period of 1160 through 1186 commerce in total and per shipments increased almost tenfold. These documents are taken from individual company/family records so should be read directionally on not as the absolute amount of trade.
[295] Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohad*e, 193, 215-216. See also Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire*, 178.
[296] Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, 33. "Es bien extraño que, con este poder tan extenso, carezcamos de dinero, mientras que los Lamtuna [Los Almoravides], que solo dominaban hasta esta ciudad de Tlemcen, pagaban bien a sus soldados; y nosotros ahora que poseemos esta y, además de lo que estaba en sus manos, todo Ifriqiya, no tenemos que dar a los almohades. Esto es lo mas extraño del mundo." Translation is mine.
[297] Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 119. Increased under Abu Abd Allah Muhamad al-Nasir to 4.66 grams.
[298] Amar S. Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads and the Banu Ghaniya* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 184-185.

The second possible reason for Abd al-Mu'min's pronouncement was to intimate his suspicions of his tax collectors. Almohad caliphs would conduct audits of their tax authorities, often with unforgiving results if found wanting in their duties. The second caliph, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, while travelling through Fez on his way to al-Andalus, completed an audit of the entire area, which included Fez, Meknes, and Mulaya. From his audit of the *almojarife* (tax collectors), he determined that they had defrauded the state and through torture he impelled them to return 460,000 dinars.[299] Abd al-Wahid also speaks of tax collection and how during the reign of the second caliph no one from the entire territory impeded the delivery of money owed to Marrakech.[300]

The Almohad clearly monitored and controlled their economy and the documentation of gold production from the work of Messier provides convincing evidence that they maintained strong gold production, albeit less than the Almoravid, until the period of al-Nasir. They clearly understood that armies marched for money as much as they did for belief, and payment from taxes and booty gained from conquest represented two material levers available to help control their kingdom.

4.6 Military

4.6.1 Jihad

No standing armies existed in the Maghreb or the Iberian kingdoms; warriors were attracted by booty and remuneration. The salience of the communication network described above underscores the need to project and ensure clear transmission of any and

299 Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib,* 88.
300 Abd al-Wahid Al-Marrakusi, *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista volumen iv*, 209.

all victories of the empire. This provided a reinforcing propaganda cycle that helped recruit troops to missions when the time arose. Replacing the blood-feuds of the Maghreb with a periphery target, such as the promise of the booty-rich Iberian peninsula, supplied a strategy utilized by the Almoravid and Almohad alike to refocus the tribal mosaic of the Maghreb.

This confirms one of the challenges for Ibn Tumart. Initially, his target was not the Christians of Iberia but the Almoravid. His needed to create a scenario whereby Muslims would enact jihad upon other Muslims, which was forbidden in Islam. This underscores why his condemnation of the anthropomorphism of the Almoravid became critical. Ibn Tumart labelled the Almoravid worse than Christians' and more deserving of jihad. He exhorted his followers to "apply yourselves in jihad against the veiled infidels for this is more important than combating Christians and all the infidels twice or even more."[301] Feuds existed between tribes before the arrival of the Almohad, but to develop a sustained movement Ibn Tumart not only condemned the enemy as heretics, but recruited a military leader with the ability to win battles and gain the confidence of his followers. This demonstrates why Abd al-Mu'min's seven-year war proved so critical. By skirting the Anti-Atlas mountains he isolated and conquered smaller, less defended towns, further away from Almoravid influence, and in doing so established a reputation as a military leader who could achieve victory and deliver the requisite spoils this entailed.

301 Fromherz, *The Almohads: The Rise of an Islamic Empire*, 84.

Where did these soldiers come from? After initial recruits from tribal members, soldiers adhered to the Almohad cause from throughout the empire. The second caliph, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, in preparation for his first campaign to al-Andalus, called for volunteers to join the jihad in 1189. Yaqub Yusuf would review each tribe's troops one by one and prepare them for the coming campaign.[302] In this instance, soldiers from the farthest reaches of the kingdom answered the call:

> Many people hastily arrived, from the Abyssinians to the veiled ones of the dessert [Almoravid]. They assembled in the capital; blacks and blonds of diverse languages; and amongst the volunteers were Arabs and regular soldiers; enlisted and not enlisted; and the result was that this multitude stretched through the lengths of the fields more numerous than drops of water or so many rocks.[303]

Many of these men enlisted for one or two campaigns and then would return home to their tribe in the Maghreb after the offensive. After the victory over Ibn Mardanis in Murcia, for example, the troops asked for, and received, their pay and permission to return home, as they had been gone for a long period of time.[304]

Inherent in this call to arms was the requirement for a leader who could deliver compensation on a consistent basis. The notion of jihad figured in this equation; however, it is clear that jihad alone, with no hope of remuneration, had little influence on raising an army. The Almohad had replaced the Almoravid in the Maghreb, and as a result the resources of the realm were at their disposal and surely the stories of wealth and opportunity had reached the furthest outposts of the kingdom. These soldiers, once

302 Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib,* 61.
303 Ibid., 50. "…se reunieron en la capital rubios y negros con diversidad de lenguas de los reclutados y de los voluntarios y de las masas de árabes y de soldados regulares, alistados y no alistados, para los que resultó estrecha la amplitud de la llanura, pues fueron más numerosos que las gotas de agua y que las piedras." Translation is mine.
304 Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, 225.

enlisted, expected to be paid either in their share of the booty, gold, or both. Once victory was attained, recognition, pay, and celebration not only reinforced *asibiya* but also the reputation of the caliphate. It is instructive to review the reunion that Abd al Mu'min conducted amongst his troops after his victory in Ifriqiya. An account of how each soldier was paid was related by Ibn Sahib: Abd al Mu'min, seated by himself in an elevated chair, ordered his vizier Abu-l-Ala Idris to dispense shirts of linen to all present and divided 3,000 horses among the group.[305] Clearly, the booty accrued from victory reinforced loyalty and participation in the next campaign.

4.6.2 Enlist the Arab Tribes

Abd al Mu'min, a member of the Kumiya tribe, was born in the coastal town of Tagra, and because of proximity became more familiar with the Hilali Arab tribes than the Masmuda from the Central Atlas mountains. Many historians believe that the Banu Hilal and Banu Salaym had migrated to the Maghreb in the eleventh century having been sent by the Fatimids to subdue Ifriqiya.[306] Victoria Aguilar Sebastián argues that this was not an invasion but a slow penetration that progressed over many years.[307] Brett has also shown that the Arab tribes had arrived before the conflicts between the Fatimids and the Zirids, demonstrating that the domination of Ifriqiya could not have been the main objective for their arrival.[308]

305 Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, 176-177.
306 José Ramírez del Rio, "Documentos sobre el papel de los Árabes Hilalies en el al-Andalus Almohade: traducción y análisis," *Al-Qantara* 35, no. 2 (2014): 369. This was an aggregation of different tribes (Banu Sulaym, Banu Riyah, Banu Hilal…).
307 Victoria Aguilar Sebastián, "Aportación de los árabes nómadas a la organización militar del ejército Almohade," *Al-Qantara* 14, no. 2 (1993): 393-394.
308 Michael Brett, "Ifriqiya as a Market for Saharan Trade from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century," *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 3 (1969): 349, 352, 360.

Regardless of the reasons for their appearance in Ifriqiya, by the time of the Almohad, the Arab tribes constituted a military presence that had to be addressed. At the battle at Seti (1153) Abd al-Mu'min subdued the Arab tribes, but rather than leave them as a disruptive force in the region, he invited them to join the Almohad to conduct jihad on the Christians in al-Andalus.[309] This accomplished three goals for al-Mu'min: first, he displaced a large group of Arab fighters from Ifriqiya, where assuredly they would have remained a threat to revolt; second, he added the formidable fighting strength of this notoriously skillful cavalry to his army; and finally, through this political maneuver Abd al-Mu'min established a counter-balance against the Almohad sheikhs and the larger membership of the Masmuda tribe.[310] He further engineered a demand from the Arabs, whereby they requested that he provide one of his sons to govern their region, to which he eloquently agreed:

> God from the mouth of his prophet Moses said, Give from my people a Vizier to my brother Aaron, fortify him with my strength, and have him participate in my authority. The Almohad were happy with this decree. [311]

Huici Miranda saw this for what it was, an adept political maneuver to not only further concentrate Abd al-Mu'min's strength, but also to position his son, whom he sent as the ambassador that the Arabs requested, to succeed him as king.[312]

309 Aguilar, "Aportación de los árabes nómadas," 396-397.
310 Ibid., 396-397.
311 Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, 32. "Dijo Dios por boca de su profeta Moisés. Ponme como Visir de mi gente a mi hermano Aarón, fortifica con el de mi fortaleza y hazlo participe de mi autoridad'. Los almohades se alegraron con la disposición que adopto, y les parecía perfecto la ida que tuvo." My translation.
312 Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohad*e, 170.

Abd al-Mu'min and the subsequent caliphs, granted the Arab tribes autonomy and control over their own troops;[313] they were often mentioned in battle formations as separated and earned a reputation as fierce and tactically-strong combatants.[314] Their practice of *torna-fuye* (attack and retreat) constituted an exercise to lure the enemy to pursue them as they feigned retreat, spread their troops, and in the ensuing melee, double back and attack.[315] Their remuneration consisted of money, material, and their portion of the booty, but they were not paid in land, accentuating the fact that they were more nomadic than the Almohad troops.[316] For example, in the reunion mentioned in the previous section, where Abd al Mu'min conducted an assembly after his victory in Ifriqiya, he distributed specific amounts of pay among his troops:[317]

Table 5. Example of Almohad Payment to Almohad and Arab Soldiers

Almohad Soldiers	**Payment**
Armed Horsemen	10 dinars
Semi Armed Horsemen	8 dinars
Armed Infantry	5 dinars
Semi Armed Infantry	3 dinars
Arab Soldiers	
Armed Horsemen	25 dinars
Semi Armed Horsemen	15 dinars
Infantry	7 dinars
Arab Sheikhs	50 dinars
Arab Leaders	100 dinars

313 Aguilar, "Aportación de los árabes nómadas," 400.
314 Ibid., 409. See also Ramírez del Rio, "Documentos sobre el papel de los árabes Hilalies en el al-Andalus Almohade: traducción y análisis," 361-362.
315 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 226.
316 Aguilar, "Aportación de los árabes nómadas a la organización militar del ejército Almohade," 408.
317 Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, 176-177.

What provides more insight than the absolute amount of the soldiers' wages, was that the Arab fighters received double that of the Almohad. This confirms the more mercenary and precarious nature of the Almohad relationship with the Arab tribes. Abd al-Mu'min understood this relationship; he did not expect the same level of ideological fervor that he did from the Almohad, and was well aware that the Arabs could be a disruptive force if not compensated as expected.[318]

The Arabs participated in every major battle that the Almohad fought, in particular in al-Andalus, and this underscores their importance to the Almohad military efforts. On route to al-Andalus to the battle of Alarcos the Arab tribes committed 130,000 men, between cavalry and foot soldiers, and the caliph Al-Mu'min ordered his son, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf, to guide them across the straits.[319] Regardless of the potential exaggeration of this figure, even at half this amount, these troops provided a significant commitment to the campaign and indicate the importance the Arab tribes represented to the war efforts of the Almohad. This relationship was characterized by Idhari as a precarious balancing act and the Almohad, cognizant that the Arabs were difficult to manage, did not always hold them in the highest esteem.[320]

The argument amongst historians is whether, as Huici Miranda opined, Abd al-Mu'min had compromised the purity of his cause by incorporating the Arabs; or

318 Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 80.
319 Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 68. See also Victoria Sebastián Aguilar, "Aportación de los árabes nómadas," *Al-Qantara* 14, no. 2 (1993): 396-397. Aguilar notes that they provided 40,000 cavalry at the battle of Santarém.
320 Ibid., 64. Upon his visit to Ifriqiya, Abd al Mu'min was said to have asked for information about the "ignorant and hypocritical Arabs."

alternatively, whether Abd al-Mu'min made the necessary and expedient choice. It should be argued that the latter was the case. After bringing the Arabs under submission, not coopting them into the Almohad fold would have left them to fight another day in Ifriqiya. Because Abd al-Mu'min came from one of the smallest tribes of the movement, the leverage of an additional, non-aligned group provided his most obvious choice. Even when the empire collapsed, and the Arabs went their own way, the cause of the dynasty's demise could not be laid at their feet. As will be shown, they may have accelerated the fall of a weakened regime, but they were not the cause.

In the last twenty years, our understanding of the Almohad has improved immensely, in particular through the increased study of their rich cultural heritage. Additionally, the explanation that their decline came from internecine family disputes has been routinely cited. What remains less explored are three aspects that led to their precipitous fall. First, little has been written to directly link the populating mechanism of the northern kingdoms in Extremadura and other conquered areas to the Almohad decline. This aspect, which took longer to develop than the more oft-studied specific battles, has been under appreciated. Second, as mentioned, the internecine conflicts of the descendants of Abd al-Mu'min has been documented, but there is little comment on how the fundamental divisions between the Masmuda and the Zenata, within the Almohad, created irreparable fault lines. And finally, minimal work has been completed on what influence economic decline and mismanagement had on the demise of the Almohad empire. These three aspects, which now will be reviewed, were interconnected and are critical to understanding the negative reinforcing cycle that led to their decline.

Chapter 5: The Fall

5.1. Rise of The North

Save the momentary exception of Las Navas de Tolosa, it would be misleading to imply that the Christian kingdoms were aligned versus the Almohad enemy. Castile was still at odds with León, and Navarra constantly looked over its shoulder at both Aragon and Castile as potential usurpers of its territory. However, Castile represented a much stronger kingdom than it had been a century before, as was Aragon. The Almohad were threatened by a different enemy at the turn of the thirteenth century than the Almoravid had faced. Five variables had changed for the Northern Christian kingdoms since the Almoravid victory at Sagrajas, and although none of these phenomena taken separately would alter the configuration of the Iberia, when aggregated, they created a formidable front against the Almohad.

5.1.1 Fall of Toledo and Zaragoza; Lessons Learned

First, the fall of Toledo (1085) and Zaragoza (1118), which occurred before the Almohad arrival, had moved the defensive border of Iberian Christendom from the Douro to the Tagus river, incorporating a large portion of Extremadura into Christian hands. This not only increased the kingdoms' tax base, but also the man-power available to them. The Christians had gained valuable experience from their many skirmishes and humiliating losses at Sagrajas and Los Arcos. These wounds had not healed and Christian chroniclers still referenced these defeats a hundred years later. The lessons Alfonso VIII of Castile learned from his losses did not improve his military approach to the battlefield, but convinced him to avoid mistakes by making fundamental political and logistical

maneuvers to support his plans. Two examples are worth mentioning. First, he maximized the benefits that his fellow monarchs could provide while minimizing any potential interference. He financed the participation at Las Navas of his cash-poor cousin, Pedro II of Aragon, and more importantly, he married his daughter, Berenguela, to Alfonso IX of León and negotiated a truce with him at Cabreros in 1206.[321] By the time of Las Navas, Pope Innocent III had forced the couple to annul their union based on consanguinity; nevertheless, the marriage must have engendered some good will, along with the five children it produced, for although Alfonso IX did not participate at Las Navas, he did not join the Almohad cause as he had in the past. Additionally, in 1207 Alfonso VIII resolved the long-standing quarrel with Navarre by the treaty of Guadalajara; and in 1209 a peace was agreed to between Navarre and Aragon[322] because Alfonso, through separate agreements, eliminated his threat to their sovereignties. The second major change that Alfonso VIII made was that he leveraged the growing strength of the church to help manage his kingdom and fight the Almohad. Innocent III's bull of February 1212 that called for an Iberian crusade, supported Alfonso VIII and separately, Innocent exhorted Alfonso IX of Leon to refrain from intervening or to establish new truces with the Almohad.[323]

[321] David Cantor-Echols, "Kingship, Crusade, and the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in the *Chronica Latina Regum Castellae*," *Romance Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2013): 107. Coincidentally, this marriage occurred in 1197, one year after Alfonso VIII loss at Los Arcos.
[322] Simon Barton, *The Aristocracy in Twelfth Century León and Castile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 22.
[323] Ruiz Gómez, *Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)*, 227, 232.

5.1.2 Support of the Church

The Catholic monarchs of Northern Spain opportunistically adhered to papal demands. Rome's expectations concerning marriages, divorces, and the restrictions against alliances with the Muslim south were all heeded inconsistently, and only as they suited their specific dynastic needs. However, in the instances where the needs and demands of the church coincided with those of the Spanish monarchs the result could create positive outcomes for both parties. The best example of this concurrence was Las Navas de Tolosa, where the Bishop de Rada not only coordinated with Rome to cajole additional support for Castile from its northern Christian neighbors, but the local church also provided funding for the campaign.[324]

Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, in his *Historia de los hechos de España,* provided a first-hand account of the rise of the northern Christian kingdoms and the coordination between church and state. He was the son of a noble family who had served the crowns of Navarre and Castile; his father had served Alfonso VIII, and he, Rodrigo, would become Alfonso's trusted advisor.[325] Alfonso became Rodrigo's sponsor within Castile, and he nominated him to be the archbishop of Osma, and later Toledo, which was confirmed by Innocent III on March 13, 1209. In this role Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada became the emissary between Castile and Rome,[326] and as the archbishop of the southern-most

[324] Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España*, 23-25. "También estuvieron allí presentes los obispos, que aportaron a la empresa de la fe tanto sus personas como sus haciendas, según se la dio Dios, colaborando espontáneamente en los gastos y responsabilidades."
[325] Ibid. 18-19.
[326] Ibid., 19.

stronghold of Castile he experienced first-hand the threats and opportunities provided by this border position.

In many ways, Rodrigo was pivotal to the success at Las Navas de Tolosa. Alfonso VIII longed to revenge his loss at Los Arcos; however, without the services of Rodrigo, this may never have been accomplished. Rodrigo, on his first visit to Rome in 1210, advocated that the pope declare a crusade in Spain, and subsequently, he became the emissary of the pope and Castile to southern France, where he continued to lobby for support for an Iberian crusade.[327] If the conservative wing of Spanish historians such as Alborñoz were ever looking for a standard bearer for their position, Rodrigo was such a person.

> From the Pyrenees and from sea to sea and from the ocean to the Mediterranean. They also came from the province of Narbonne which belong to the Visigoths, and even more than this, including the ten cities in the province of Africa, called Tingania. Spain was the truth, as if it were the paradise of God; from its five principle rivers, notably the Ebro, the Duero, the Tajo, the Guadiana and the Betis, and from these rivers rise up the mountains. [328]

He *knew* that the Iberian peninsula constituted one entity that had at one point been under the "reign of the Visigoths, and that the Spaniards were enormous in their amplitude, and had extended their power from sea to sea." [329]

At Las Navas de Tolosa not only had the kings of Castile, Navarre, and Aragon assembled, "a Trinity of Power" romantically labeled by Rodrigo, but their clergy as

327 Ibid., 20. See also Anon., *The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile*, 43.
328 Ibid., 148." …limitada por los montes Pirineos, que se extienden de mar a mar, por el océano y por el Mediterráneo. También pertenecían al poderío de los godos la Galia Gótica, es decir, la provincia Narbonense (…), y además una provincia en África con diez ciudades, que se llamaba Tingitania. España en verdad, como si fuera el paraíso del Señor, está por cinco ríos principales, a saber, Ebro, Duero, Tajo, Guadiana y Betis y entre ellos se alzan montañas." Translation by author.
329 Ibid., 141. Pero el reino de los godos y de los hispanos, enorme de amplitud, extendía su poderío de mar a mar…" My translation.

well. Rodrigo extoled the generosity of Alfonso in opening up his treasury to equip the assembled troops,[330] and he underscored that the church had helped finance the expedition. The church had given "as much with their presence as their estates, as God had given to them, collaborating spontaneously in the costs and responsibilities…."[331] How spontaneous this support was is open to debate, yet assuredly Rodrigo demonstrated commitment, and he, plus the assembled kings, must have applied tremendous pressure on the church to provide additional resources to reinforce the war effort.

5.1.3 Christian Military Orders

The three additional elements that strengthened the North's resistance to the Almohad were related and reinforced each other. The founding of religious military orders, the granting of community-founding *fueros*, and population increases represented variables that tilted in favor of Christian Iberia during the thirteenth century. As regards the founding of the religious orders, two, the Hospitallers (founded 1099) and the Templars (founded 1119), were not indigenous to Spain; however, their presence was welcomed and taken advantage of by the kingdoms of Iberia. Ramon Berenger III joined the Templars in 1130[332] and recall that Innocent III had entrusted Jaime I to the care of the Templars until he reached his majority, when he would employ them extensively in his conquest of Valencia (1232).[333] The Templars enjoyed an especially strong historical

330 Ibid., 312.
331 Ibid. "También estuvieron allí presentes los obispos, que aportaron a la empresa de la fe tanto sus personas como sus haciendas, según se la dio Dios, colaborando espontáneamente en los gastos y responsabilidades."
332 Sam Zeno Conedera, *Ecclesiastical Knights: The Military Orders in Castile, 1150-1330* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 35.
333 *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon (Llibre dels Fets)*, eds. and trans. Damian Smith and Helena Buffery (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 161-163. This was after an extended negotiation of how much land or payment they would receive for their participation.

relationship with the Catalan nobility, and at least three of them had reached the position of Grand Master of the Order.[334] They also had a presence in Portugal and were said to be present at the Battle of Santarém in 1147, where they helped Alfonso I defeat the Almohad.[335]

The Spanish military orders of Calatrava (1158) in Castile, Santiago (1170) in Leon, and of Alcantara (1166) in Portugal were newly consecrated in the second half of the twelfth century. Calatrava, the eponymous city of the Order where it was founded, was predominant along the Tagus river, the Castilian border with Muslim Spain. The Orders became incentivized to conquer territory as they were granted the right to possess and inherit any castles they could take from the Muslims.[336] For example, by 1188, Calatrava had accumulated under its control and protection 340 square miles of territory;[337] Alfonso VIII added to this sum after his defeat at Alarcos by granting them Albalat, Santa Cruz, Cabañas, and Suruela in 1195.[338]

The nascent military orders were not originally as organized as they would be after Alarcos. It was only after this battle that Alfonso VIII, in conjunction with the Orders, began to build a strong defensive vertebrae along the Tagus river so that by the time of Las Navas, fifteen years later, it constituted a more substantial front.[339] Carlos

334 Jospe Maria Sans I Travé, "The Military Orders in Catalonia," *Catalan Historical Review* 4 (2011): 53.
335 Forey, "The Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century," 199.
336 Ruiz Gómez, *Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)*, 141, 145. In 1181 Alfonso VIII gave them specific grants of forty yugadas, a unit of property (from Roman times: 240 x 120 feet). Gomez supposes that this would support about ten men with four yugadas each.
337 Clara Estow, "The Economic Development of the Order of Calatrava, 1158-1366," *Speculum* 57, no. 2 (1982): 271.
338 Forey, "The Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century," 205.
339 Carlos de Ayala Martínez, "Las ordenes militares y la ocupación del territorio Manchego (siglos XII-XIII)," 67.

Ayala makes the convincing argument that in the liminal period before Alarcos, Alfonso thought of the outposts along the Muslim border tactically; but after his defeat he was shocked into the realization that it was essential to incorporate the Orders into the political fabric of the realm and provide them with increased political and monetary support.[340] The ongoing payments made by Alfonso VIII to the orders support this notion; before 1195 only one payment larger than 400 *maravedis* was made, whereas from 1195 onward five separate installments of 3,000 *maravedis* or more were paid to the Orders. These payments, made annually, were contracted for a period of ten years each.[341] The military orders after Alarcos became more efficient, more centrally controlled, and developed a "institutionalized network of jurisdictions" that included castles, churches, and a trading structure.[342]

The number of troops garrisoned in any one location were most likely small; one such example, available from the record of Templars at the castle of Castellote, housed only ten members.[343] However, one instance in 1198 when the Calatrava sallied out with 400 knights and 700 foot soldiers to raid the Muslim area of Manzanares and eventually captured the castle at Salvatierra, provides an example of how their strength could be aggregated when necessary.[344] On the other hand, because many of the *fueros* and towns taken were fortified by castles, a contingent of twenty men could defend these positions

340 Ibid., 73. "Los fueros son más bien el resultado de arduos procesos de elaboración en los que la monarquía interviene activamente desde finales del siglo XII, procesos que van generando amplios proyectos de regulación territorial que, a su vez, cristalizan en instrumentos concretos y de alcance local." 85.
341 Álvarez Borge, "Soldadas, situadas y fisco en el reinado de Alfonso VIII de Castilla (1158-1214)," 64.
342 Ibid., 83-84.
343 Forey, "The Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century," 210.
344 Rodriguez-Picavea, "The Armies of the Military Orders in Medieval Iberia," 40-141. The Calatrava lost Salvatierra to al-Nasir in 1211, on the eve of his disastrous defeat at Las Navas.

for an extended period of time. Calatrava may have only had 1,200-2,000 knights, but through these they controlled much territory as previously mentioned, and would enjoin the local populations for defensive and offensive purposes. At their height, Calatrava controlled over fifty-six commandries, sixteen priories, and sixty-four villages, all of which contained a population of 200,000.[345]

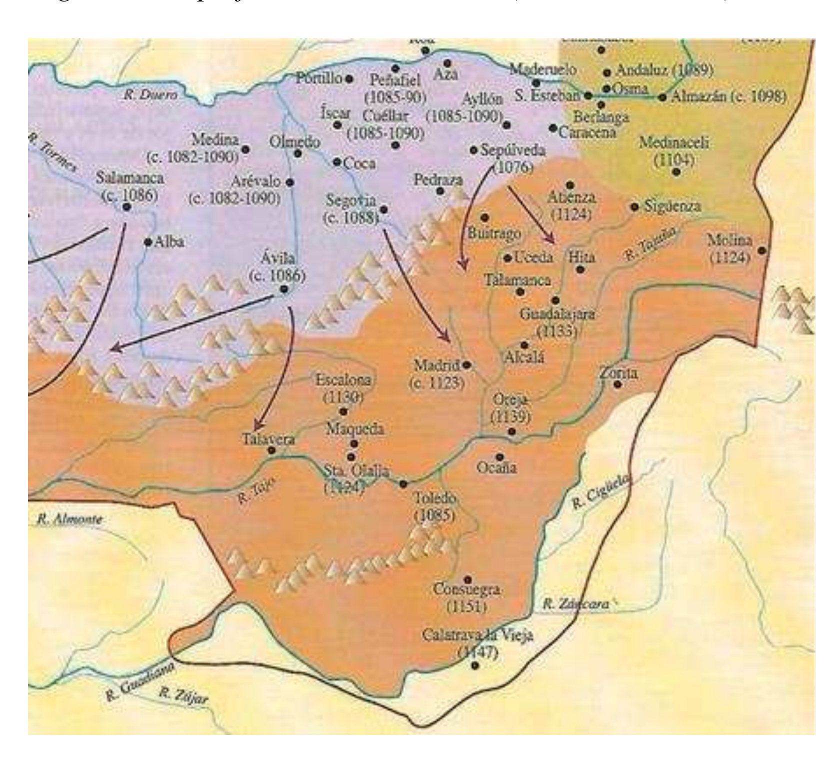
5.1.4 Encroachment of *Fueros*

The fourth strength that aided the Christian kingdoms was the initiation of *fueros*. *Fueros* represented community land grants made by the monarchs that allowed either military orders or small nobles, in conjunction with peasants, to found or join a particular town with the express intention to represent the crown in a defensive position against Muslim aggression.[346] The first documented *fuero* was the "Fuero de León" under Alfonso V (r. 999-1028) in 1017.[347] Powers, in his *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1284*,[348] details how Alfonso VI (r. 1072-1109), fully aware of the nature of border wars, encouraged the frontier settlements to expand southward. Alfonso had experienced the elation of taking Toledo in 1085, only to suffer an ignoble defeat at Sagrajas a year later, and this in turn began to accelerate his *fuero* grants. He granted Logroño (1095), Miranda de Ebro

345 Charles Moeller, "The Calatrava," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908). See also Enrique Rodriguez-Picavea, "The Armies of the Military Orders in Medieval Iberia" *Medieval Studies* 20, no. 1 (2012): 44. During the ten-year span of the siege of Granada, the Military orders provided 3,365 knights and soldiers per year.
346 Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages 1000-1284,* 18-19
347 Santos M. Corones González, *Fueros locales del reino de León (910-1230)* (Madrid: Agencia Estatal Boletine del Estado, 2018), 30.
348 Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1284*, 55.

(1099), and Vallunquera (1102) in succession. The Aragonese, paying attention to this strategy, were quick to do the same, granting *fueros* to Babastro (1100), Caparroso (1102), and Santacara (1102).[349]

Figure 7. Map of Fueros Established (not all included) [350]



Many of the early *fuero* grants were given for northern cities; however, recall that at the time of Alfonso VI, Zaragoza still had not fallen and Toledo, almost impregnable, represented the lone Christian-held city south of the Duero river. A defensive strategy by the crown clearly was required as between 1090 and 1137 Toledo was attacked over ten times.[351] Alfonso understood that Toledo, as a bridgehead, proved much too vulnerable

[349] Ibid., 20.
[350] J. M. Monsalvo Antón, *Atlas histórico de la España Medieval* (Madrid: Editorial Sintesis, 2010), 110. See also Chamocho Cantudo and Miguel Ángel, *Los fueros del reino de Toledo y Castilla La Nueva* (Madrid: Agencia Estatal Boletín del Estado Madrid, 2017), 21.
[351] Manuel Gonzalez Jiménez, "Frontier and Settlement in the Kingdom of Castile (1085-1350)," in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 60.

and began to settle lands in Extremadura to shore up this isolated outpost. His French son-in-law, Raymond of Burgundy, became a champion of this process and settled Avila in 1087, followed in quick succession by Segovia (1088), Salamanca (1100), and Soria (1110).[352]

Much has been made of the *fuero* of Cuenca (1190) that allowed outlaws and adventurers' crimes to be forgiven if they settled in the area.[353] This reveals that the monarchs understood that these border outposts were not for the faint of heart and some flexibility as to character needed to be tolerated. The most dangerous territories, such as Ucles, Mora, Oreja, and Ocaña, existed between the Tagus and the Guadiana rivers and Calatrava and the Hospitaller were granted lands in these areas.[354] The *fueros* required military service of the inhabitants, not only in the settlers' defense of their own towns, but missions that could venture further south. Subsequent *fueros* in Cáseda, Caracastillow, and Encisa, granted in 1129, had more specific, if not stringent regulations in their agreements and required that at least 30 percent of able-bodied men answer the call to arms when demanded, and for this, distribution of booty was also meticulously detailed.[355]

352 Ibid., 53.
353 Ibid., 54. See also Gómez, *Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)*, 100-102. Gómez outlines the specific military by-laws that determined military actions and booty distribution (20% for the king). Specific payments were made depending on the type of injuries occurred; for example, a broken bone merited twenty menicales. See also Luis Miguel Villar García, *La Extremadura Castellano-Leonesa, guerreros, clérigos y campesinos (711-1252)* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1986), 86."Los habitantes de Sepúlveda son libres y dentro de su ámbito territorial protegidos de todos aquellos delitos cometidos con anterioridad a su instalación en la frontera (hurto, rapto…, etc.).
354 Ibid., 62.
355 Powers, *A Society Organized for War: The Iberian Municipal Militias in the Central Middle Ages, 1000-1284*, 27.

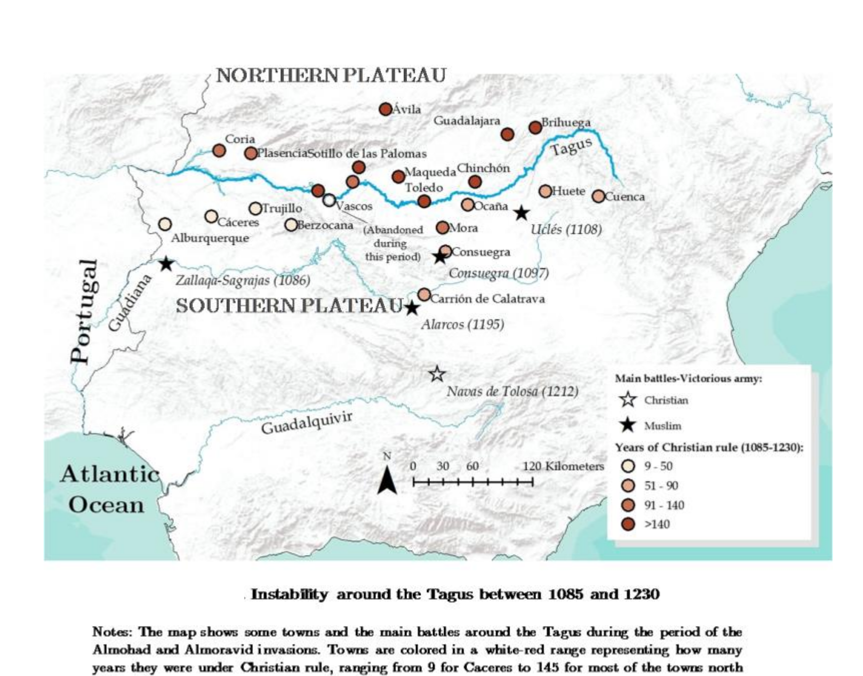
This was a time, pre-Las Navas in particular, when social mobility increased and a man with a horse and a saddle might make a name for himself and earn his way up the social ladder.[356] Villar Garcia's analysis of place names from *outside* of Castile into newly settled regions *within* Castile suggest a society with significant mobility and colonization. The place names, established from 1085 and 1157, between the Duero and the Tagus rivers, represented fifty-two newly-named towns with antecedents from areas such as Aragon and Navarra.[357] This supports the idea that the attraction of owning and passing on land to their families, for lower levels of society, was substantial.[358] In his work, *Colección de fueros municipales de los pueblos de Castilla, León, Aragon y Navarra*, Don José Maria Alonso documented over seventy *fueros* granted before the time of Las Navas.[359] Powers believes that in the post-Alarcos period the Muslim advance, blunted by the *fuero* towns of the Tajo Valley and La Mancha, influenced their decision to sue for a peace even after their major victory.[360]

The granting of *fueros* can be considered in two phases. The first, the expansion from the Ebro to the Duero river, could be regarded as occurring in a more democratic spirit as discussed above. This was particularly true before Las Navas, when the Almohad constituted a more precarious threat. During the second stage, after Las Navas, *fueros*

356 Ruiz Gómez, *Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)*, 94. See also Luis Miguel Villar García, *La Extremadura Castellano-Leonesa,* 115.
357 Villar García, *La Extremadura Castellano-Leonesa, guerreros, clérigos y Campesinos (711-1252)*, 129.
358 Ibid., 242.
359 Muñoz y Romero, *Colección de fueros municipales de los pueblos de Castilla, León, Aragón y Navarra*. See Julio González, *Repoblación de Castilla La Nueva* (Guadalajara: Imprenta Carlavilla, 1975), 109. Using a number of 700 persons per village that would equate to an increase in population of 49,000. However, this may not have been 100% incremental as some of these people would have migrated from towns within the same area.
360 Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century*, 51.

were typically granted to noble landowners that expanded and developed more large-scale operations.[361] Bisson underscores that "the counts of Barcelona and the Kingdoms of Aragon, Navarre and Leon… could count on alliances with great lords investing profitably in the spoils of conquest."[362] The *fuero* expansion represents one such example that included not only noble participation but the lower levels of society as well.

Figure 8. Map of the Contested Tagus River [363]



Instability around the Tagus between 1085 and 1230

Notes: The map shows some towns and the main battles around the Tagus during the period of the Almohad and Almoravid invasions. Towns are colored in a white-red range representing how many years they were under Christian rule, ranging from 9 for Caceres to 145 for most of the towns north of the Tagus.

Expansion became tied to a disciplined tax regime in which the crown would exact payment (*fonasdera*) from all non-participants in military campaigns.[364] In his exhaustive

361 Estow, "The Economic Development of the Order of Calatrava, 1158-1366," 281.
362 Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century*, 95.
363 Daniel Oto-Peralías, "Frontiers, Warfare and the Economic Geography of Countries: The Case of Spain," *Social Science Research Network* (2018): 1.
364 José M. Santamarta Luengos, "Fiscalidad regia en León 1230-1350," *Hispania,* 60, no. 208 (2001): 496.

work of Castile's management of their economy, *Fiscalidad y poder real en Castilla (1252-1369)*, Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada details how the Iberian Christian kings would forgive military service in exchange for taxes. This work also specifies the ongoing negotiation between nobles and monarchs regarding the *quinto real* (the royal 20 percent) which could be negotiated or forgiven during expansion into Muslim territory. While he documents a period later than discussed in this paper; Ladero verifies that many of these taxation policies were built from rules developed in the early thirteenth century.[365]

5.1.5 Population Growth and Control

The fifth pillar that strengthened the North, one being explored by economists but not as actively by historians, was the change in population. Europe and Spain nearly doubled their populations in the years between 1000-1300.[366]

[365] Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, *Fiscalidad y poder real en Castilla (1252-1369)* (Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 2011), 34-35, 49. Also see Julius Klein, *The Mesta: A Study of Spanish Economic History, 1273-1836* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), 147. Klein details that Zaragoza, conquered in 1118, already had detailed tax regime regarding the transhumance of sheep already by 1129.

[366] Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones, *Atlas of World Population History* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 99-105; 219-223. Europe's population doubled from 1000 to 1300 from 36M to 79M, (18). Italy, which could be considered Spain's Mediterranean analogue, grew from 5M to 10M from 1000 to 1300, (106-109). See also Josiah C. Russell, "Population in Europe," in Carlo M. Cipolla, ed., *The Fontana Economic History of Europe*, *vol. I: The Middle Ages* (Glasgow: Collin/Fontana, 1972), 25-71. This source has Iberia with a population of 7M in 1000 and 9M in 1340.

Table 6. Medieval Population in Iberia and the Maghreb (M) [367]

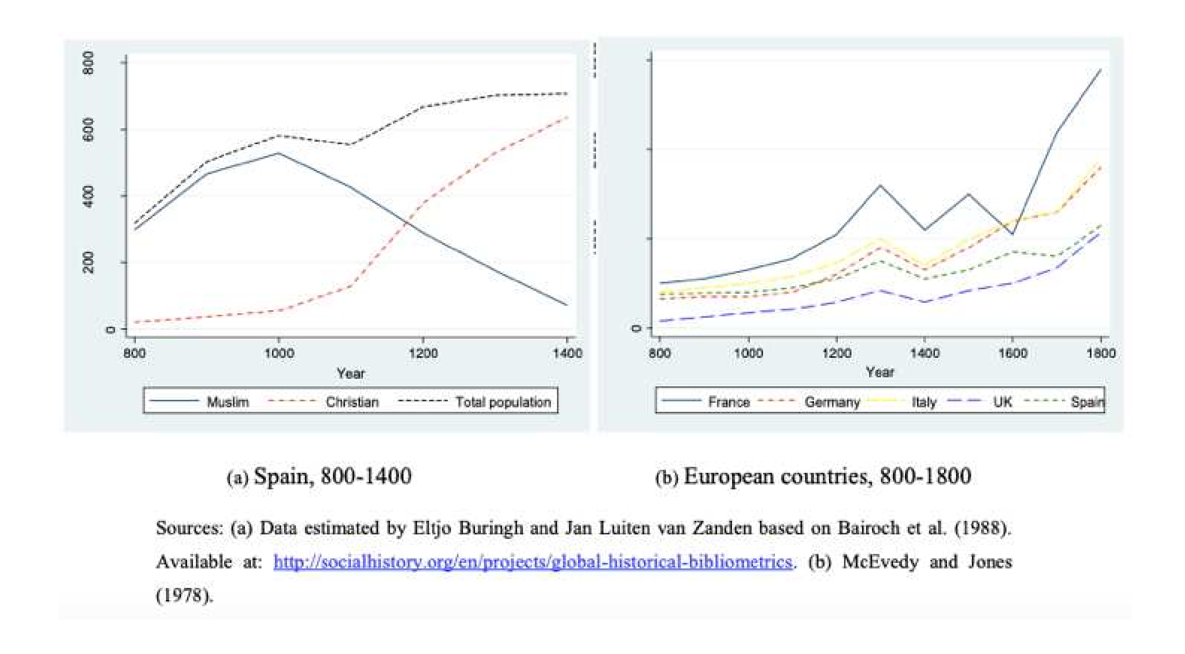
Year	1000	1100	1200	1300
Spain	4.0	4.5	5.5	7.5
Portugal	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.2
Tot. Iberia	4.6	5.2	6.4	8.7
Morocco	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Algeria	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Tunisia	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Tot. Maghreb	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0

Accordingly, both the Muslim rulers of al-Andalus and the northern kingdoms enjoyed increased manpower and the economic activity that it engendered. However, by the year 1200 the North had steadily expanded southward and the amount of population under control of the Christian kingdoms and the Islamic south was essentially equal.[368]

367 Ibid.
368 Cuberes and González-Val, "The Effect of the Spanish Reconquest on Iberian Cities," 379.



Figure 9. Evolution of Medieval Spanish and European Population



(a) Spain, 800-1400

(b) European countries, 800-1800

Sources: (a) Data estimated by Eltjo Buringh and Jan Luiten van Zanden based on Bairoch et al. (1988). Available at: http://socialhistory.org/en/projects/global-historical-bibliometrics. (b) McEvedy and Jones (1978).

By some estimates, at the beginning of the *taifa* period less than 75,000 Christians lived in cities in Iberia whereas the Muslim population living in urban environments represented almost half a million.[369] By the year 1200, Christian and Muslim populations are estimated to be equally urbanized. A closer look at the largest urban centers of Iberia (see appendix, Figure 10 for pop. of all cities) demonstrates that both Muslim—and Christian—controlled cities gained population; however, the share of Iberia's urban population controlled by Christian monarchs increased dramatically from 16% in 1000 to

[369] Ibid., 379. This study also controlled for other variables and determined that "This is our second main result: the effect of the Reconquest on urban shares vanishes once we control for a time trend. Taken together, these two findings suggest that, although the Reconquest seemed to have had an initial negative impact on the urban shares of these cities, this effect was just temporary…. Then we estimate the average effect on the urban shares of our sample of Iberian cities by using city-specific time dummies, finding that cities regained their pre-Reconquest urban share in less than one hundred years" (92-96).

39% in 1200, with over 70% of this change being explained by the capture of Toledo and Zaragoza.[370]

Table 7. Urban Population Change in Iberia Between 1000 and 1200

	1000	**1200**	**%Chg.**
Total Iberian Urban Pop.	509	619	22%
Christian Controlled Urban Pop. Pre 1000	83	107	29%
Christian Reconquest Urban Pop.	124	135	9%
Total Christian Controlled Urban Pop.	207	242	17%
Muslim Controlled Urban Pop.	426	377	-12%
% Muslim Control Urban Pop. 1000			84%
% Christian Control Urban Pop. 1000			**16%**
% Muslim Control Urban Pop. 1200			61%
% Christian Control Urban Pop. 1200			**39%**

While speculative and deserving of more research, it is not illogical to assume that the tax benefit of this increased population and urbanization would have improved the Christian monarchs' ability to combat their Muslim adversaries. The data underscore that in the year 1000 the Maghreb and Iberia had the same population base from which to draw

370 See Table 10 in the appendix for a city by city analysis of which urban centers switched from Berber to Christian control from 1086-1212.

resources, but by 1200, not only had the total population in Iberia grown substantially higher than the Maghreb, but the Christians' relative share in Iberia had increased by over 100%. Bernard F. Reilly goes as far as to hypothesize that by the time of Las Navas the Muslim rural population may have been "hollowed out" with all the fighting and may have emigrated to Granada or the Maghreb.[371]

Figure 10. Map of Major Medieval Cities of Iberia [372]



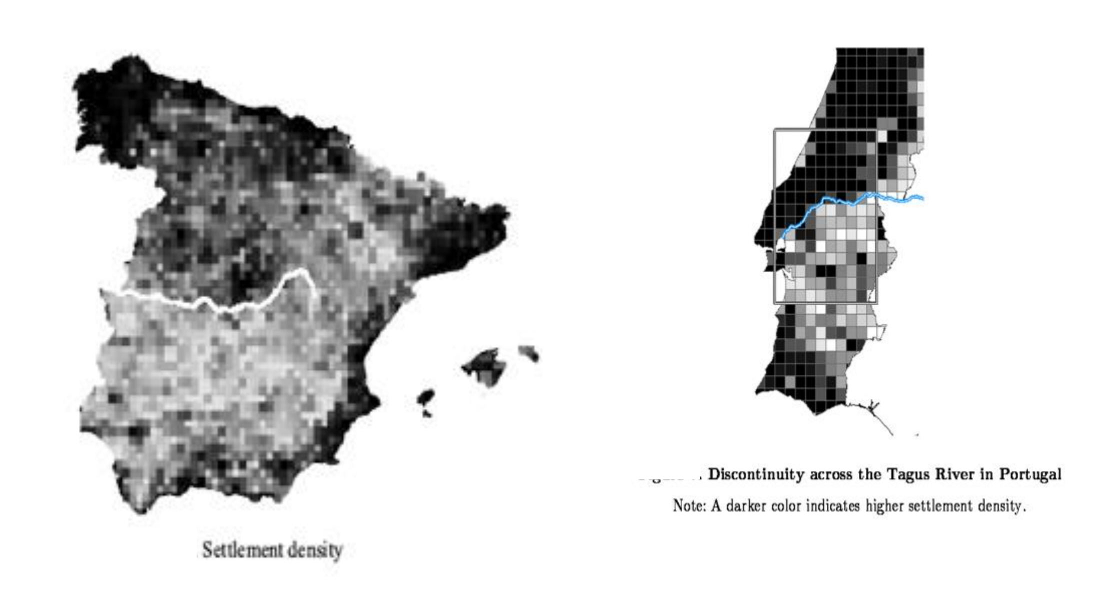
These territorial and population trends must have aided the founding of the military Christian orders and the populating of *fueros*. A more recent study by the economist Daniel Oto-Perlías[373] makes the compelling argument that "frontier warfare

[371] Bernard F. Reilly, "Las Navas de Tolosa and the Changing Balance of Power," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012): 83-87.
[372] *Historical Atlas of the Mediterranean*, Exploredthemed.com.
[373] Oto-Peralías,"Frontiers, Warfare and the Economic Geography of Countries: the Case of Spain," 1. See also Ruiz Gómez, *Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)*, 242-243.

favors a colonization of the territory characterized by low settlement and high population concentration."[374] He argues that these battle-challenged frontiers encouraged well-defined strategic positions (castles); livestock over agriculture as "mobile assets were easier to protect; and that the *fueros* along the Tagus represented a defensive vanguard with well-defined boundaries.[375] Taking the earliest census data available and extrapolating to the past, Oto-Perlías demonstrates a stark line built across the Tagus river where medieval *fueros* were granted.[376]

374 Ibid.
375 Klein, *The Mesta: A Study of Spanish Economic History,* 187. See Klein's study for a documentation of the development of the Mesta, essentially the sheepherders guild, and the crown's tax regime regarding their transhumance.
376 Oto-Peralías, "Frontiers, Warfare and the Economic Geography of Countries: the Case of Spain "The empirical analysis supports the above hypothesis by revealing a large and robust jump in settlement density and population concentration across the River Tagus, whereas there are no geographic and climatic discontinuities across it nor pre-existing differences in settlements and Roman roads. In contrast to this settlement process, the territory north of the Tagus was colonized under the king's control. This area became the rearguard of the kingdom and was vital for its defense. Towns and urban centers predominated, mostly under royal jurisdiction, with charters that granted extensive freedom and rights to settlers (Portela, 1985; González Jiménez, 1992). The area was much safer and attracted more settlers. This territory was protected by the Tagus and the system of castles surrounding Toledo, which allowed a more developed settlement and economic activities (Rodríguez-Picavea, 1999). All these conditions led to a more balanced and widespread settlement of the territory."

Figure 11. Settlement Density above the Duero River



Although the exact figures for the number of knights, soldiers, and population elude historians, it is clear that the relative manpower gains had swung in favor of the Christian North and aided their effective defense and aggression versus the Almohad.[377]

5.2 Las Navas de Tolosa: ***"Causa de la ruina del Andalus…"*** [378]

The purpose of employing Las Navas de Tolosa as a pivot point for the Almohad decline is not to emphasize their military deficiencies. Rodrigo de Rada[379] and Ibn Idhari[380] believed, as did Huici and O'Callaghan, that the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa signaled the beginning of the end for the Almohad in Spain. This represented the moment when "the balance of power…tipped decidedly in favor of the Christians."[381] Al-Nasir's

377 Ibid., 28, 32.
378 Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 269.
379 Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España*, 278. "The origin of the decline and annihilation of the Almohad." My translation.
380 Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 269.
381 O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, 76.

loss at Las Navas should not be construed as a militarily defeat, per se, but a culmination of bad choices under non-ideal circumstances, that a stronger leader could have survived. The earlier loss at Santarém in 1184 provides an excellent example; not only had the Almohad been defeated, but their caliph, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf , was killed. Al-Nasir's father, al-Mansur (r. 1184-1199), was the successor that managed to hold the empire together for another fifteen years under these trying circumstances before being succeeded by his young son.

Al-Nasir inherited the kingdom at a very young age (ten years old), and he was only nineteen when he travelled to the Battle of Las Navas in al-Andalus. Ominously, on the eve of al-Nasir's departure (Nov. 1210) a disastrous fire occurred in Marrakech. This proved to be not only a bad omen, it also depleted all the supplies of the market of the Almohad capital and it is probable that it negatively affected the confidence of a superstitious populace.[382] Al-Nasir believed that this fire may have been started by dissident tribes and suspects were rounded up and executed.[383] But the damage was done and as related by Idhari most of the merchandise in the market place had gone up like "a candlewick in a lamp." This must have increased the strain on supplying the troop train headed north and was further exacerbated by mismanagement of supplies when, upon Nasir's arrival to the northern coast, it was discovered that the royal warehouses were empty. This caused inflation in the marketplace and hunger of his troops. Nasir castigated those responsible, but the erosion of confidence had already begun.[384] Idhari documents

[382] Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 259-260.
[383] Ibid., 260.
[384] Ibid., 262.

that punishment was meted out for the fire in Marrakech and for the supply chain mistakes,[385] which leads one to believe that either someone sabotaged al-Nasir's success or that he may have blamed innocent people. Idhari makes clear that the lack of supplies became dire and there was fear of troops "disappearing" from the ranks.[386] For the enlisted men, regardless of the reasons for supply shortfalls, it would have been difficult not to lose confidence and hold their leader responsible for these mishaps.

A logistical obstacle that Huici Miranda underscores was simply travel time and distance: al-Nasir would traverse 1,500 kilometers to reach the battlefield, which he did over the course of fifteen months, with skirmishes and smaller battles in between. Alfonso VIII, conversely, would move his troop train less than 20 percent of this distance, and it took only twenty days to arrive at the engagement.[387] The stress of travel and the supply chain shortages must have taken its toll, and Ibn Idhari explains that the "Almohad did not strive very hard in this battle and they were not sincere in their efforts on account of the castigation they had received from al-Nasir."[388] This was further exacerbated by the lack of payment of his troops. The Almohad chronicler, Abd al-Wahid, his work completed only twelve years after the event, provided this background to the battle:

> The main reason for this defeat was the divisions in the heart of the Almohads. In the time of Abu Yusuf Ya'qub they drew their pay every four months without fail. But in the time of this Abu Abd-Allah [al-Nasir] and especially during this particular campaign, their payment was in arrears. They attributed this to the

[385] Ibid., 260-261.
[386] Ibid., 262.
[387] Huici Miranda, *Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines)*, 229.
[388] Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 269. "…sólo que los Almohades no se esforzaron en esta campaña y no fueron sinceros en ella a causa del castigo impuesto por su emir al-Nasir a sus jeques, matándolos y exterminándolos por mano del encargado de ello…"

> viziers and rebelled in disgust. I have from several of them that they did not draw their swords nor train their spears, they did not take any part in the preparations for battle. With this in mind, they fled at the first assault of the Franks.[389]

Al-Nasir's leadership was not aided by his youthful, blue-eyed, blond haired appearance with a reputation for avarice and ruthlessness.[390] Idhari inserts an out-of-sequence story into the middle of his battle preparation narrative: two sheikhs of Ceuta and Fez were "decapitated in cold blood" by order of the caliph one month before the conflict. Idhari states that these executions provided "a motive for reflection for the thinker and a warning for the carefree," implying that this occurrence preoccupied and disconcerted the assembled troops.[391] The circumstances would have challenged the most seasoned of leaders, but maintaining order among men asked to follow a non-battle-tested youth, that had not provided adequate food nor pay, with a bad omen in his wake (the fire of Marrakech), explains the lack of commitment documented by the Arab chroniclers. Reading between the lines, one could surmise that al-Nasir's leadership skills, coupled with hard traveling, food shortages, and lack of remuneration, logically would have led to desertions and a less than enthusiastic showing of the Almohad troops at Las Navas de Tolosa.

Huici Miranda acknowledges that little strategy was involved in open field battles such as Las Navas.[392] The main decisions entailed which day to attack and how to assemble troops, both of which led to the all-important issue of number of fighting men.

389 Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters, James M. Powell, eds., *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 88.
390 Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 216.
391 Ibid., 269.
392 Huici Miranda*, Las grandes batallas de la Reconquista durante las invasiones africanas (Almorávides, Almohades y Benimerines),* 12.

No mention of surprise attacks or securing the higher ground at Las Navas is mentioned in the narratives; both armies were well aware of the other's position. What remains clear from the detailed chronicle of Rodrigo de Rada, is that Alfonso and Rodrigo planned this battle for two years and both opened their coffers to attract and maintain the armies assembled.

> While the nobles and people of the kings of Castile and Aragón assembled, the noble king of Castile provided sufficiently for all the expenses of everyone who had come from Poitou, Gascony, and Provence, and from other regions, and of the king of Aragón himself. Such a quantity of gold was distributed there every day that the counters and the weighers could scarcely reckon the multitude of coins necessary for expenses. At the king's request, all the clergy of the kingdom of Castile had granted one-half of all their revenues that year to the lord king.[393]

Alfonso promised to outfit 2,000 knights with their squires, 10,000 sergeants on horseback, and up to 100,000 foot-soldiers, not to mention the support train behind them."[394] This largess must have attracted more men and by definition confirms a better planned attack than the slap-dash performance at Sagrajas and the impatience of Alarcos. The significance of founding and utilizing the military orders became apparent at Las Navas as the orders of Calatrava, Santiago, the Temple, and the Hospital were present,[395] although they represented less than ten percent of the assembled troops.[396]

From the reports above we may also speculate that perhaps, for the first time, the Almohad were outnumbered. Recall that before leaving the shores of Ceuta supplies were short and the troops were hungry. At Alarcos the Bishop de Rada reported that al-Nasir's

[393] *The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile*, 43-44.
[394] Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España*. 312. See also O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain,* 70.
[395] O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, 70. Alfonso's letter to the pope says that 100,000 of the Almohad men fell in battle, which surely was an exaggeration, 72.
[396] Ruiz Gómez, *Los orígenes de las órdenes militares y la repoblación de los territorios de La Mancha (1150-1250)*, 233.

father had assembled "an infinite army, a crowd like the grains of sands of the sea,"[397] but Jiménez de Rada made no such reference at Las Navas. Ibn Idhari relates in *al-Bayan* that at Las Navas there were more Christian troops assembled than had been in hundreds of years.[398] Huici Miranda, the historian who conducted the most in-depth analysis of this battle, speculated that the Muslims had 100,000 combatants and the Christians only 60,000, although both these numbers seem elevated.[399] Contrarily, Rodrigo de Rada mentioned above that Alfonso had provisioned over 112,000 men. Rodrigo's number could be exaggerated; however, compared to previous battles, the Christian soldier count versus the Almohad, on a relative basis at minimum, had assuredly improved. Troop counts aside, taking the Almohad and Christian narratives into consideration, most generals would have opted for a more involved 60,000 troops, than an underfed, underpaid, and underconfident group of soldiers that *may* have numbered 100,000.

Las Navas was lost before it began. The lack of leadership and the inability to overcome bad luck or sabotage doomed this enterprise before it left the shores of Ceuta. However, it also underscores the fragility of the Almohad governing apparatus. The Almohad created a family enterprise and the individual who led the dynasty could instill confidence or apathy in his followers. With an increasingly aggressive northern foe, military action was demanded of a king. Even if the governing substrate remained in place, the inability to confront the enemy and achieve victory undermined the legitimacy

[397] Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España*, 299. "Su ejército, infinito, su muchedumbre, como la arena del mar." My translation.
[398] Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 272. "…nosotros sabemos que esa era una muchedumbre, como no se les reunió a los infieles hacía cientos de años."
[399] Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 427.

of the empire and the ability to promise rewards. Al-Nasir's lack of control of his supply chain and the inability to pay his troops reinforces the importance of managing the Almohad economy and its influence on military victories. Al-Nasir would not survive his defeat; he made it back to Marrakech only to die under mysterious circumstances. "Only God knows the truth of what happen" relates Idhari.[400]

5.3 Loss of Control of the Arab Tribes

It appears that the first group of the coalition who understood that the Almohad power was beginning to wane were the Arab tribes, who, as previously mentioned, were integral to the Almohad advance in Iberia. Abd al-Mu'min had negotiated away some control when he contracted with these tribes, but he understood that they were as capable as they were mercenary. The Arabs must have sensed that as the Christian states pushed further south, the Almohad would be unable to support their monetary demands, demonstrating again the link between geographic control and economics. After the debilitating loss of Las Navas the Arab tribes began ransacking towns and demanding tribute outside of Seville, undermined Almohad authority and frightened their would-be supporters.[401] In the Maghreb, they dispersed into separate groups, fending for themselves and backing various factions and extracting compensation for their support.[402] The Almohad had taken advantage of the Arab strengths, but after the collapse at Las

400 Ibn Idhari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib*, 274. See also Al-Himyari, *Kitaba Ar-Rawd al-Mi'tar*, 280.
401 Ramírez del Rio, "Documentos sobre el papel de los árabes Hilalies en el al-Andalus Almohade: traducción y análisis," 389.
402 Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 188.

Navas, the Arabs sowed anarchy in both Andalusia and the Maghreb often fighting for opposing sides of internal dynastic conflicts.[403]

5.4 War on Four Fronts versus a Family Dynasty

The Almohad attempted to build an empire on the foundation of their proto state. The Maghreb, Ifriqiya, the Balearic Islands, and al-Andalus each presented specific challenges; and the Iberian kingdoms of Ibn Mardanis, Aragon, Castile-Leon, and Portugal all posed threats that had to be reacted to and managed. Initially, the Almohad had subdued the Maghreb and this represented their center. On the near periphery, they had conquered Ifriqiya and coopted the Arab tribes; however, intermittent threats from the Ibn Ghaniya of the Balearics continued.[404] This would be partly resolved when the Almohad conquered three areas. First, upon the death of Ibn Mardanis (1172), Murcia summitted; second, the last of the Almoravid were conquered when the Balearic islands fell in 1203; and third, the resubmission of Ifriqiya in 1206. With this geographically consolidation, the Almohad rose to the apotheosis of their power.[405]

Abd al-Mu'min should be credited for creating this empire, but he also established a familial dynasty which proved to be contrary to a lasting state. He had concentrated power around his family and slowly unwound the integrated network originally established by Ibn Tumart, thus weakening any possibility of cross-pollination between tribes. The centralization of the Almohad administration contrast to what had occurred under the Almoravid where annual jihads against the Christian kingdoms were

403 Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 578. See also Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 174.
404 *Al-Hulal Al Mawsiyya, crónica árabe de las dinastías Almoravide, Almohade y Benimerin*, 132-142.
405 Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 80.

conducted on a regional basis. The Almohad had created a scenario whereby the caliph himself would conduct jihad but controlled the troops centrally. In one sense this performed as a powerful propaganda tool to communicate the caliph's commitment to jihad; however, each region lost its ability to respond quickly to Northern aggression.[406] The Andalusian philosopher and historian, Al Turtusi (1059-1127), represents one of the few Islamic historians to directly comment on this issue, and he attributed the loss of al-Andalus to the contraction of regional governmental involvement and less fiscal support from the central government: "Our sultans saved money and lost soldiers. This resulted in the Christians having a reserve of soldiers and the Muslims having a reserve of currency, and in the end, this lead to them subduing and being triumphant over us."[407]

Because the Almohad had established a familial dynasty, the regional powers were almost exclusively run by contenders to the throne, which engendered "kings in waiting" should the caliph falter. Even Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (r. 1163-1184), one of the most celebrated caliphs of the Almohad, had to fend off his two siblings for power. These brothers, the governors of Cordoba and Bugia, remained the last to recognize his sovereignty, and only after lengthy negotiations. After finally giving this recognition, his brother from Bugia decided to visit Abu Ya'qub Yusuf in Marrakech, only to be met by an untimely death on route.[408] These family dynamics undoubtedly conspired to the undoing of al-Nasir (r. 1199-1213).

406 Ibid., 7.
407 Victoria Aguilar, "Instituciones militares: el ejército," in *Historia de España, Menéndez Pidal*, ed. María José Zamora Jover (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1998), 191. "Nuestros sultanes, por el contrario se guardaban los dineros y perdían soldados. De donde resultaba que los cristianos tenían reservas de soldados y los musulmanes reservas de dineros, y a esta circunstancia se debe que nos sojuzgaran y triunfaran de nosotros." Translation is mine.
408 Huici, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 224.

Al-Nasir was replaced by his son, Abu Ya'qub al-Mustansir (1213-1224), himself between ten to fifteen years old. By all accounts al-Mustansir was characterized by weak leadership and never left the palace in Marrakech unless it was to visit Tinmal, thus forfeiting the pageantry strength of the caliphate.[409] Abu Ya'qub al-Mustansir was dominated by his uncles and two Almohad sheikhs[410] and Khaldun states that "as a philosophy of government it had ended in the 1220s and 1230s in conflict between the dynasty of Abd al-Mu'min and the shaykhs of the Masmuda who formed the aristocracy of the movement."[411] This increased influence of the ulema coupled with the division between tribal chiefs, would lead to the assassinations of the two caliphs succeeding al-Mustansir, as each group vied for influence.[412] An interesting aside was that neither of these puerile kings had been scion of inter-married tribes. Both of their mothers had been Christian slaves and as a result they could only count on agnatic support of their reign. There would be no Urraca (who maintained Castile until Alfonso VII reached his majority) or the Nazfa, Abd Rahman I mother's tribe, to save these Almohad caliphs.[413]

The Almohad had the opposite problem of the northern Christian dynasties. In contrast, Alfonso I The Battler, who willed his kingdom to Rome because of his lack of an heir, Abd al-Mu'min had eighteen legitimate sons, who could, and often did, vie for

409 Maribel Fierro, "Algunas reflexiones sobre el poder itinerante Almohade," *E-Spania* no. 8 (2009): 4. Refer to section 4.4.1.1 of this paper for more detail.
410 Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 437. See also Pascal Buresi, "The Story of the Almohads in the Kingdom of Fez and of Morocco," in *The Soul of Morocco*, *The Story of the Almohads in the Kingdom of Fez and of Morocco*, ed. Jerónimo Paéz, 105-146 (Fez: Fondation Benjelloun Mezian, 2017), 115.
411 Michael Brett, *Ibn Khaldun and the Medieval Maghrib* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 3. See also Ibn Idari al-Marrakusi, *Al-Bayan al-Mugrib,* 211, Huici's commentary.
412 Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period,* 98.
413 Abd al-Wahid Al-Marrakusi, *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista volumen* iv, 254, 268.

power or turn into meddling uncles, in attempt to control the caliph.[414] The Almohad state could not survive two weak, inexperienced leaders in succession, and the decline began in 1212 under al-Nasir and only accelerated under al-Mustansir.

[414] Buresi, "The Story of the Almohads in the Kingdom of Fez and of Morocco," 10.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

There were parallels to the final stages of the Almohad empire to those of the Almoravid. The Christian kingdoms had pushed the Almoravid south taking Toledo and Zaragoza and this steady advance had not slowed during the reign of the Almohad. The Almoravid had to confront the revolt of a tribal confederation in the Maghreb, the Almohad, just as the Almohad resisted the Marinids. The last two heirs of both kingdoms were too young and inexperienced and in some ways conformed to Ibn Khaldun's model of dynastic decline. However, the Almohad collapse can be traced to three interrelated problems, that if not unique to their rule, certainly were more intense than the Almoravid had experienced. First, their northern Christian neighbors had instituted political and military measures to support their territorial gains and increased their tax base, making them a more formidable opponent than the Almoravid had faced. Second, the Berber tribal system gave priority to agnatic progeniture succession over ability, thereby failing to provide a consistent mechanism to contain or reverse revolts when two weak leaders succeeded each other. Again, this would be similar to what the Almoravid experienced but was exacerbated in the case of the Almohad by the rule of a minority tribe, the Zenata, over the majority Masmuda. Third, and most importantly, the declining economy aggravated the internal fissures within the kingdom. This was intensified for the Almohad for three reasons. First they had a larger empire to manage than the Almoravid. Second, they would lose all revenue from al-Andalus. And finally, the resources of gold production and agriculture, internal to the Maghreb economy, would both decline under their rule.

6.1 Stronger Northern Enemy

In the face of their own political weakness, the Almohad had a northern enemy who through many incremental steps presented a more formidable and integrated foe than the Almoravid, had faced one hundred years earlier. The northern kingdoms, through slow but steady development of a *fuero* network, immigration, and new military orders, gained and controlled more territory and were in a strong position to resist the Almohad advance. Some of this southward encroachment stemmed from a natural frontier mentality that men possessed on both sides of the Tagus river; however, some decisions, such as developing *fueros* and military orders, were proactively taken by the northern monarchs, with the support of the nobility and the church, which provided them an enlarged tax base that ensured their financial advantage over the Almohad.

6.2 Tribal Conflict and a War on Four Fronts

The Almohad built many of the foundations of a central state in the Maghreb and assembled an empire and herein lies one of their problems. Attempting to control four geographic regions while confronting five different enemies would have been a challenge for any state, medieval or otherwise, but to manage an empire of this size without a standing army made this task more difficult. This challenge was exacerbated by what Glick called "a social system [where] instability at the dynastic level is normal and expected because tribal political life takes the form of a constant testing of forces."[415] Glick further explains that the clan is the basic Berber unit that lives and fights together.

415 Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages,* 196.

Each group would come together for a joint cause, but in many ways they fought and lived quarantined from each other with little group adhesion.[416]

The Moroccan historian Abdullah Laroui, in his *History of the Maghreb,* posits that what is often viewed as a strength, namely the Almohad ability to repress successive rebellions, in particular those of the brothers of Ibn Tumart and the Ibn Ghaniya in Ifriqiya, was in fact a weakness. He argues that these rebellions provide a clear sign that the population was not supportive of the Almohad regime.[417] Abun-Nasr concurs with Laroui, and emphasizes that the first three strong caliphs were able to subdue revolts among the larger Masmuda tribes; however, al-Nasir and al-Mustansir's weakness invited insurrection.[418] The tribal group of Abd al-Mu'min, the Kumiya, were part of the Zenata federation of tribes and their leadership was resented by the larger Masmuda tribal group. García offers the hypothesis that the Almohad Masmuda cooperated with Abd al-Mu'min at Tinmal only because they had no choice.[419] Once the tribes descended from the mountains, controlled the economy, and gained more resources under the first three caliphs, cohesion dissipated and opened the door for tribal divisions, particularly in the face of weaker leadership and a deteriorating economy.

Gellner spoke of the inherent conflict of Ibn Khaldun's philosophy: tribes had social cohesion, but that only cities had civilization. Once a state attempted to be developed (in the cities), cohesion was often lost.[420] The "institutionalized dissidence"

[416] Ibid., 138.
[417] Abdullah Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 187-188.
[418] Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, 98.
[419] García, "The Masmuda Berbers and Ibn Tumart," 11, 17.
[420] Gellner, *Saints of the Atla*s, 4.

that came from tribes being culturally similar but politically independent created an environment in which once external threats faded, cohesion and *asibiya* were lost. What started as an apparent strength, the co-mingling of tribes, in the end provided a lasting division. The appointment, or usurpation, of leadership by a member outside the Masmuda, in this case Abd al-Mu'min, a Zenata, created an irreparable fault line. The adhesion of the Zenata to the Almohad cause in their military campaigns also provided them with insight into the strength—and weaknesses—of the Almohad and tempted their tribal segmentary politics. The disintegration of *asibiya* may have been particularly acute in al-Andalus; not only were the rough Berber tribes often looked upon as uncouth and uncultured, but the Maliki ulema, who had never been fully replaced, resisted the religious revolution the Almohad had attempted to impose.

6.3 Lack of Transitional Institutions

The Almohad never succeeding in building impersonal state institutions respected for their final judgements or that received the consistent loyalty of their subjects.[421] Strayer in his *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* could easily have been referencing the Almohad when he wrote:

> The vast majority of the subjects of an empire did not believe that the preservation of the state was the highest social good; in case after case they viewed the collapse of empires with equanimity, and either reverted to smaller political units or accepted without protest incorporation in a new empire ruled by a new elite… But no city-state ever solved the problem of incorporating new territories and new populations into its existing structure, of involving really large numbers of people in its political life.[422]

421 Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, 10.
422 Ibid., 11.

Their governing institutions, pressured by the northern Christian dynamic outlined above, could not tolerate the political and economic implications of a military loss such as Las Navas *and* dynastic transitions of power to two puerile, inexperienced monarchs.

The Almohad transitions of power compare unfavorably to the minority of Jaime I of Aragon, who at the age of five was nurtured through his minority until he was prepared to lead the consolidated kingdom of Aragon/Catalonia by the church and the Knights Templar, with the acquiescence of the nobility. In this case, the most powerful political agents of the age, the Catholic church, supported the candidacy of Jaime I of Aragon, as did his nobles and the Knights Templar who understood the benefits of stability. Finally, he had no sibling rival; the only other family member that could have challenged Jaime was an unpopular great uncle, who was neutralized by Innocent III. Al-Nasir, on the other hand, had fifteen brothers,[423] seventeen uncles,[424] and countless cousins waiting to take his throne. This family threat, coupled with a divided clergy lacking the institutional strength of the Catholic Church, added to the lack of cross-tribal cohesion.

6.4 Puerile Kings and Succession

The formula that Khaldun suggested that assured the fourth generation of a dynasty was doomed to fail was not universally true. The Umayyads had eight transitions of power. In fact, the most exalted of all the Umayyad kings, Abd al-Rahman III, was a skip-generation selection, whose grandfather identified him "out of order" and anointed

[423] Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahid Al-Marrakusi, *Colección de crónicas árabes de la Reconquista volumen iv,* 216.
[424] Ibid., 197.

him his successor over Abd al-Rahman's own father and uncles. Abd al-Rahman would rule the Umayyads for almost forty years and lead them to the height of their glory. An apologist might argue that the Almohad had a similar system in place. An example of this occurred during the transition from Abd al-Mu'min to his progenitor and declared successor, Mohammad. Mohammad had been proclaimed crown prince; however, he was a profligate drunkard, and as a result he was replaced within two months in a coup organized by his brother, Ali ibn Yusuf, and his father's vizier, Ibn Hafs.[425] This coup, cannot be characterized as "a system" but it would never have transpired without the support of the ulema and the family. However, even in this process, Ali ibn Yusuf, arguably the most accomplished Almohad caliph, had to negotiate at length with his two refractory brothers, the governors of Cordoba and Budia, before they recognized his candidacy.[426]

6.5 Weakened Economy; The End of the Almohad

The Almohad revenue base in al-Andalus had been halved and was declining. They could no longer promise additional booty or wealth from the peninsula to their followers and as a result, the Arab tribes were opportunistically disrupting the economy and demanding tribute. The economic wealth exploited in al-Andalus at the turn of the thirteenth century represented a high tide for the Almohad, and when it receded it revealed an economy that was under threat in the Maghreb as well. Evidence suggests that the agricultural production had already been weakened by neglect of the Almohad and was threatened by the rebelling Marinids. When the Marinids first appeared on a

425 Ibn Sahib Al-Sala, *Al-Mann Bil-Imama*, 54.
426 Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 224.

war-like footing (~1212-1215) they temporarily took one of the central nodes to north-south trade, Fez, and controlled the outer territories, leaving the Almohad occupying only the cities by the time of al-Nasir.[427] This loss of control of geography outside of the major cities further explains why al-Mustansir would not travel beyond Tinmal and Marrakech for fear of his safety.[428]

Laroui conjectures that the concentration of trade in the coastal cities represented an indication of the deterioration of the central economy more than of a compensatory strength, especially in light of the advancing Genoese trade network on both sides of the Mediterranean littoral.[429] He interprets the trade agreements struck with the Italian city states as a sign of weakness not strength, and opines that the Almohad economy was in decline even before the time of al-Nasir.[430] He believes that the Almohad's prosperity came not as a result of their own development of trade, but by spending the accumulated wealth of the Almoravid and Andalusian princes before them.[431] Laroui's position appears overstated, as trade between the Genoese and the Almohad-controlled ports represented as much as 30 percent of the former's trade. This indicates that the Almohad's integration with the greater Mediterranean economy provided more than enough leverage for an equitable relationship with the Genoese. However, there is a sliver of evidence that demonstrates that in 1214, only two years after Las Navas, trade with Ceuta dropped from 13 to 4.2 percent, possibly signaling a disrupted Almohad

427 Huici Miranda, *Historia política del imperio Almohade*, 445. See also Abun-Nasr, *A History of The Maghreb*, 104. "Between 1250 and 1255 they extended their control over the region of Tadla, Sijilmasa, and Wadi Dra'a… thus [they] occupied most of the fertile regions of Morocco."

428 Buresi and El Aallaoui, *Governing the Empire,* 150.

429 Laroui, *The History of the Maghrib,* 187.

430 Ibid., 186-187.

431 Ibid., 192.

economy, or an early indication of the famine that occurred under al-Mustansir.[432] Barely two years into the rule of al-Mustansir, a deadly famine struck the Maghreb for three years in (1215-1217) food reserves had been exhausted, and the tribes began to revolt and disrupt the kingdom. This loss of food reserves further suggests that the Almohad were mismanaging their agricultural resources. The archeological work of Boone and Benco, mentioned in section 4.5, supports this view and underscores that the Almohad had begun to change their economic priorities, emphasizing trade over agriculture. Their lack of attention to agriculture may also help explain some of the disastrous supply shortages experienced by al-Nasir during his Las Navas campaign.

Gold production, the financial lifeblood during the rise of both Berber empires, had declined 90 percent from the time of the first Almohad caliph, Abd al-Mu'min. Under the Almoravid, gold production averaged 1,222 kilograms per year but had fallen to the still substantial amount of 629 kilograms annually under Abd al-Mu'min. These levels would collapse to 77 and 63 kilograms a year under al-Nasir and al-Mustansir respectively, and undermined the ability of the Almohad to attract armies and control their internal threats.[433]

Ultimately, the Almohad empire could not survive a war on four fronts, successive weak leaders, and an adversary that had substantially increased its power base. After the two adolescent dynastic changes of al-Nasir and al-Mustansir the next two

432 Abulafia, *The Two Italies*, 182. See table 6. This trade would increase to normal levels after this, but the decline, after many years of steady trade, does call into question what occurred in this period.
433 Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 217. See also Baadj, *Saladin, the Almohads and the Banu Ghaniya*, 184-185. Separately, it should also be noted that there was in this period a transition of power from Ghana to the Sosso and subsequently the Mali. The Mali Empire was established in 1235 and this period of transition merits more study as this may also explain the decline in gold production.

caliphs were assassinated. This resulted in the Almohad suffering nearly thirty years of ineffective leadership from which they would not recover. The Marinids in the Maghreb and the Christians in al-Andalus had gained momentum. Internal tribal dissention, dynastic competition, and the loss of confidence of their Muwallad subjects in al-Andalus and the Arab tribes in the Maghreb, created circumstances that demonstrated that the governing mechanisms built by the Almohad where insufficient to maintain the largest North African empire in history in the face of their faltering economy.

The unravelling of the Almohad empire did not occur because the Maliki ulema from al-Andalus, who were threatened by Ibn Tumart's philosophy, finally garnered enough strength to incite a rebellion. Nor could the Almohad decline be blamed on the independent-minded Arab tribes; there was no increase in these tribe's ability to rebel throughout the Almohad reign. Additionally, one questions whether the Marinids would have been successful in their rebellion had they faced an economically vigorous Almohad regime. Finally, internal competition for power occurred in all medieval societies and the Almohad did not lose their empire because of these internecine struggles, some of which they had already survived. These theories suggested by scholars leave a gap in the historiography that this thesis hopefully explained. The Almohad empire collapsed, not from the threats of Maliki ulema, the Marinids, or internal disruption, but conversely, because they could not control their economy. Economic disintegration opened the door to these rebellions; not the reverse.

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Appendix: Population Control, Timeline, Popes of period, and Iberian Rivers

Table 8. Muslim to Christian Realm Urbanization and Control

City	1000	1200	C/M
Badajoz	16	9	C
Barcelona*	24	27	C
Braga	10	10	C
Burgos	18	21	C
Leon	15	40	C
Barbastro	35	35	Chg. C
Coimbra	20	20	Chg. C
Lisbon	15	15	Chg. C
Toledo	37	45	Chg. C
Zaragoza	17	20	Chg. C
Cartagena	33	33	M
Elvira	22	22	M
Granada	26	60	M
Jerez de la Frontera	19	25	M
Sevilla	90	90	M
Palma	25	30	M/ I G
Almeria	27	18	M/ IM
Murcia	19	15	M/ IM
Malaga	15	40	M/ IM
Valencia	26	44	M/ IM
			% Chg.
Total Iberian Urban Pop.	509	619	22%
Christian Pre Reconquest	83	107	29%
Christian Reconquest	124	135	9%
Total Christian Controlled	207	242	17%
Muslim Urban Population	426	377	-12%
% Muslim Urban Control 1000			84%
% Christian Urban Control 1000			16%
% Muslim Urban Control 1200			61%
% Christian Urban Control 1200			39%

Population numbers are in (000).
M/I G: Muslim Control Ibn Ganiya; M/IM Muslim Control Ibn Mardanish
* Barcelona is my calculation based on the sources 1300 pop. of 48.
Source: Paul Bairoch, Leon Batou and Pierre Chevre,
The Populations of European Cities 800-1500
(Geneve: Center of International Economic History, 1988).

Table 9. Almohad Timeline from 1086-1248

Battle of Sagrajas	1086
First Crusade (1096-1099)	1096
Ibn Tumart's Journey East	1106
Aragonese Capture Zaragoza	1118
Ibn Tumart's Return from the East	1119
Ibn Tumart recognized as Mahdi	1120
Siege of Marrakech	1120
Consturction of the Walls of Marrakech Walls by Almohad	1126
Battle of Buhayra	1130
Ibn Tumart dies	1130
Battle of Las Fragas	1134
Second Crusade (1147-1150)	1147
Zanata tribes join Almohad	1145
Almohad take Cadiz	1145
First Almohad mission to al-Andalus	1145
Almohad sieze Fez	1146
Almohad take Sevilla (1147-1148)	1147
Abd al-Mu'min captures Marrakech	1148
Normans take al-Mahdiyya	1149
Battle of Setif; conquest of Banu Hilal tibe	1153
Almohad take Granada	1155
Abd al-Mu'min dies	1163
Badajoz restored to Almohad control	1169
Ibn Mardanish dies; Almohad take Murcia	1170
Plague in Marrakech	1176
Ali b. Ishaq b. Ghaniya, Almoravid ruler of Balearcs, captures Bijaya	1184
Battle of Santarem	1184
Almohad lose Battle of 'Umra to Ali b. Ghaniya	1186
Battle of Hamma; Almohad take 'Umra and Gabes	1187
Saladin takes Jerusalem	1187
Third Crusade (1189-1192)	1189
Yaqub al-Mansure takes Roman Venus from Madinal al-Zahra in Cordoba	1190
Battle of Alarcos	1195
Fourth Crusade (1202-1204)	1202
Almohad take Balearic Islands	1203
Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa	1212
al-Nasir dies (or is murdered)	1213
Cordoba Falls	1236
Murcia Falls	1243
Seville Falls	1248
Valencia Falls	1248

Table 10. Catholic Popes

Years	Pope
1088 - 1099	**Urban II**
1099 - 1118	Paschal II
1118 - 1119	Gelasius II
1119 - 1124	Callistus II
1124 - 1130	Honorius II
1130 - 1143	**Innocent II**
1143 - 1144	Celestine II
1144 - 1145	Lucius II
1145 - 1153	Eugene III
1153 - 1154	Anastasius IV
1154 - 1159	Adrian IV
1159 - 1181	Alexander III
1181 - 1185	Lucius III
1185 - 1187	Urban III
1187	Gregory VIII
1187 - 1191	Clement III
1191 - 1198	Celestine III
1198 - 1216	**Innocent III**
1216 - 1227	Honorius III
1227 - 1241	Gregory IX

Figure 12. River Systems of Spain.

